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WIZARD®

Volume 1
Number 42
FEBRUARY 1995

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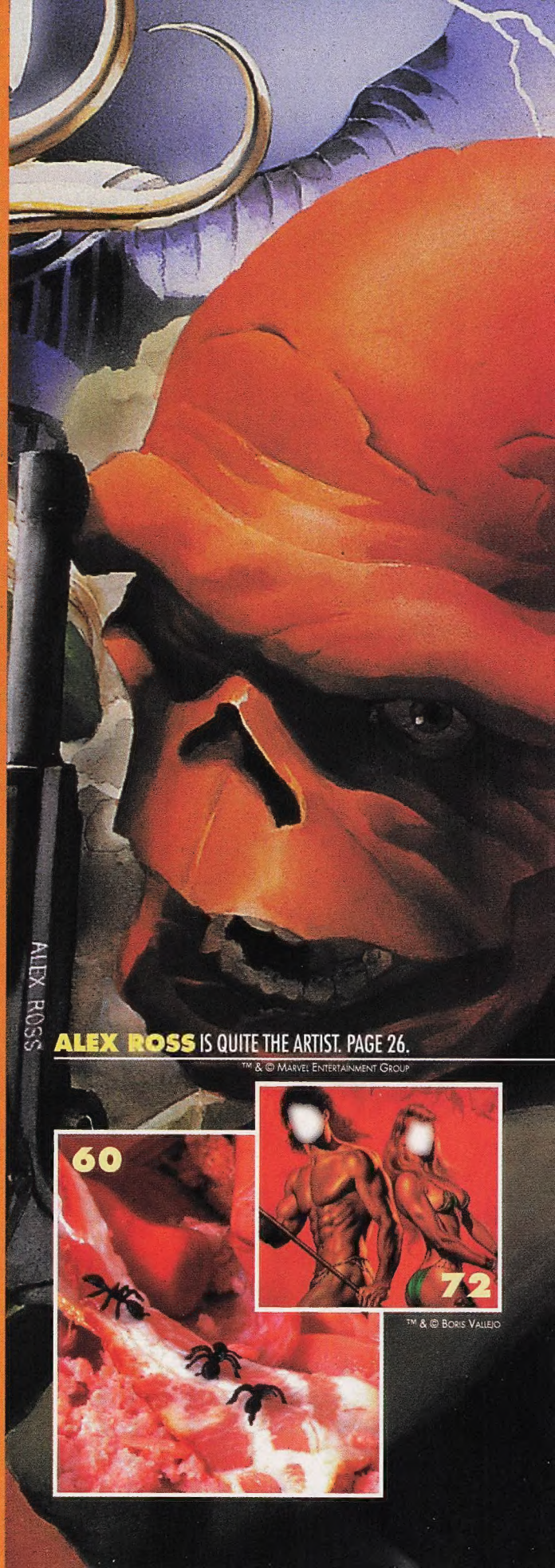

ALEX ROSS IS QUITE THE ARTIST. PAGE 26.

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WIN!

1,001 of the coolest comics of all time!

Find out how on page 39!! PHOTO: V. HOLLAND

editorial

HOWDY

This was certainly a lot harder to write than I thought. Which is kinda weird, seeing as how I've been writing for this magazine for nearly four years now. It usually comes pretty naturally to me. Not this time though.

So anyway, here I am. Howdy. My name's Pat McCallum, and I'm the editor-in-chief of *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*. I started on here as an editorial assistant, and after working with (and learning from) some incredibly talented people over the past four years, I now find myself taking over the page that the esteemed Big Cheese himself once reigned over. (Am I the only one who's gonna miss seeing those goofy photos of Gareb with the harsh word balloons every month?) While Gareb is off blazing new trails for Wizard Press, I'll be filling up this here page. Why me? Heck, 'cause I'm bigger than anybody else here, and I've also been at this game for quite a while now. And even though I once had a monthly column way back when (anybody remember Collecting Comics in the '90s?), and used to handle the chores over on our letters page, I've since had more and more of my time peeled away, forcing me to relinquish those writing responsibilities.

And, quite frankly, I missed it. Yeah, I still edit this book, and I still write pieces here and there, but I missed having a more direct line of communication with the fans. Well, with the *Wizard* staff becoming stronger with each progressing issue, I've found myself with just a little bit more time, so bingo, here I am. And while I won't be running pictures of me every month with a different celebrity—or a guy in a bear suit—what I will try to do, is be a voice for *Wizard* to the fans. I'll try to keep you up to speed with everything that's going on here in our little corner of Wizard Press, and see to it that I can better address some questions you may have about *Wizard*.

From the get-go, let's see if I can't nip some of those in the bud. As some of you will notice, there have been some changes in *Wizard* with this issue. We've dropped a few things that seemed to have run their course, and a couple of things got a bit of a facelift. Most noticeable of all, though, is our coverage of the comic industry. We've changed the way we've formatted our feature articles. Instead of doing nothing but monstrous, six- or seven-page features (which are still great, and won't be *completely* removed from the magazine), we are now making more room to cover the extremely diversified field of comics every month. This includes going more in depth with the big stories, sharing the spotlight a little more evenly with the other great creators out there, or just taking a goofy idea and running with it. I guarantee you that over the next couple of months, *Wizard* is going to be a mighty interesting place to be.

So hey, stick around. This ought to be pretty good.

Adios,

Pat McCallum
Editor-in-Chief

mastHead

Editor-in-Chief Patrick McCallum
Editor Brian Cunningham
Managing Editor Hank Bordowitz
Contributing Editors
Patrick Daniel O'Neill, Marc Wilkofsky
Copy Editor Andrew Kardon
Senior Price Guide Editor Jon Warren
Editorial Assistants
Bob Marshall, David Prager
Research Assistants
William A. Christensen, Phil Colligan, Mike Fasolo, Mark Seifert
Administrative Assistant Mercedes Cabo

Design/Art Director Matt Tierney
Design Assistant Arlene So
Bullpen Album of the Year Live's *Throwing Copper*

Contributing Writers
Sean Aune, Steve Blackwell, Jack Curtin, Dave Galvan, Paul J. Grant, Andrew Steven Harris, Clifford Lawrence, Todd McFarlane, Jim McLauchlin, Ruth Morrison, Tom Palmer Jr., Buddy Scalera, Michael Searle, Stephen Shamus, Marc Shapiro, Craig Shutt

Cover Painting Alex Ross

Wizard Press
President/Publisher Gareb S. Shamus
Executive Assistant Martha Scheidegger
Production Director Douglas Goldstein
Marketing & Promotions Manager Christine Cush
Promotions Assistant Tracey Altro
Marketing Associate Daniel Reilly
Customer Service Maria Capello @ (914) 268-3594

Full Page Inc.
National Sales Director Andrew Eisenberg (NY)
Group Advertising Director Michael C. Roberts (NY)
Eastern Account Manager Alison James (NY)
Western Account Manager Karen Lee James (CA)
National Accounts Manager Keri C. Uejo (CA)
Advertising Coordinator Karen Evora (NY)
NY: ph:(914) 268-3907 fax:(914) 268-5386
CA: ph:(310) 530-6560 fax:(310) 530-6690

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BRACE YOURSELF

Magic Words

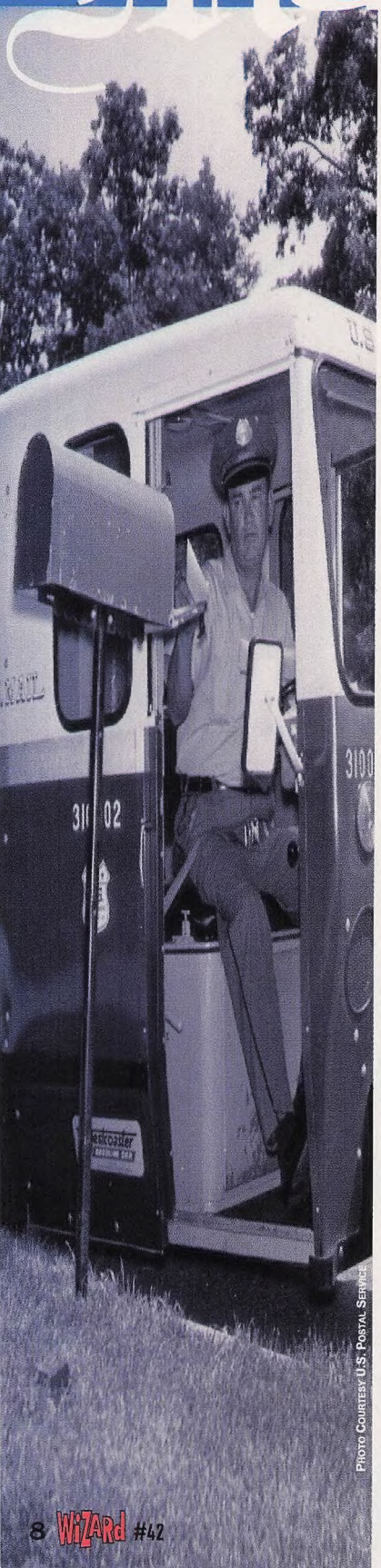

Photo Courtesy U.S. Postal Service

It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times...

Ha! Fooled you! Bet you thought the "Best of '94/Worst of '94/What I Want in '95" letters were going to run last issue. Well, so did we. But time constrictions being what they are (that would be constricting), we had to push them back one issue. Thanks to all who participated, especially those wacky people who actually next-dayed their letters to get 'em in on time (Lisa Craig of Los Angeles—your letter will run in issue #44, I swear!). I'm just going to kick back and let you people ramble for a while without doing any blabbing myself. Yeah, right. Well, at least I'll keep my babble to a minimum.

Hey, Wizard People,

Okay, real quick, year in review:

☞ A lot of comics returned to a pretty high level of quality, especially Image and a handful of small, independent publishers. Marvel stayed about the same quality-wise, which is pretty low, but no one was surprised.

☞ But just when gimmick covers were on the way out, Image started the stupid trend once again with its "variant covers." Call it whatever you like, it's still pretty lame. Hopefully that trend in comics will die soon, but luckily most of the comics inside those covers were worth it.

☞ Defiant, the best and most underrated publisher on the market, closed shop. No one really much cared. Too bad.

☞ DC put out a decent mini-series with *Zero Hour*, which was very nice, but no *Crisis* (of course, *Crisis* wasn't *Crisis*). The really surprising things were the #0 issues. What seemed at first to be a dumb gimmick, actually turned out to be good, solid stories and got a good number of people to start noticing DC again. A few of the issues were weak, but most were solid hits (like *Starman* and *Green Lantern*) or showed renewed potential in an ongoing series (*Flash*, *Hawkman*).

☞ *Sandman* lasted another year, but *Doom Patrol*, consistently the most underrated comic in the mainstream market, got the ax, and not many people cared.

So what will 1995 hold? Another bland X-Men "event"—we already know that. Maybe *Suicide Squad* will come back, but that would be too good to be true. And maybe *Sandman* will last another year—who knows?

Marlan Harris
Nuevo, CA

Dear Wizard,

I'm writing in response to your asking for input on the past year in the comics industry. Let me start on the high points of comics today. In an industry where art, covers, and secondary market price potential get most of the attention, it's nice to see good, solid stories. *Cerebus*, *Bone*, *Shi*, and *Evil Ernie* are all independents with great plots that people have finally started to notice. And let me insert here that anyone who hasn't read *Poison Elves* should give it a try.

I'm sure many people would agree that cover gimmicks are one of the many low points this year. All the companies have been beating the dead horse here. But in my opinion, the lowest point of the year would have to be the alienation of the younger generation. Just look at the

"Death of Superman" storyline. While everyone was running out buying up *Superman #75* for its investment potential, the kids were the ones who missed it. I think one of the most important things to remember is that everyone was young one time, and if children can't buy comics they want today, they aren't going to buy them tomorrow.

Finally, the letters page is by far my favorite part of the magazine. Even though you have plenty of prizes, Marvel has the letters page "No-Prize" and DC's Superman titles have the "Baldy," so maybe you could give away a "Rabbit Award" each month for the best-written letters. Why call it a "Rabbit Award"? Because everyone knows a wizard can pull a rabbit out of his hat.

Kevin Boleware
Prentiss, MS

Hmmm. I've always been a fan of recognizing and rewarding excellent letters. And without all the groovy letters we get, I wouldn't have this job, which means I couldn't afford my car or my $800-a-week guacamole habit. So, OK. We'll do an award for the best letter every month. But I'll call it the "Bunny Award" instead of the "Rabbit Award." Why? Because I feel like it, that's why.

Dear Wizard,

Here we go for 1994:

The Best: The great competition between companies that makes better comics than in past years. More quality and intelligent storylines came in key titles from Marvel (X-titles), DC (Batman and Vertigo titles), and Image (*The Maxx* and WildStorm stuff). Dark Horse proved to be one of the most consistent publishers, with a mix of strong licensed titles and creator-owned series. Even more diversity in the alternative field (*Bone, Wandering Star, Strangers in Paradise, Tyrant*) was great.

The Worst: Too many expensive comics over $3 (gimmicks, deluxe editions, enhanced covers) and those blasted zero and 1/2 issues. Speculators spend more money, while real readers get more confused.

The Spider-Clone and speculation about it.

Image's Extreme Studios: Too violent and "mercenary" for long-term interest.

Malibu's Ultraverse: Just see how it's slipping away right now.

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NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!

Wishes for 1995: More success for intermediate companies like Dark Horse, but a lesser number of smaller publishers. And the majors should cancel a lot of cheesy projects. And watch out for two underrated writers who are the wave of the future: John Francis Moore and Steven Grant.

The Best from *Wizard*: Great diversity in your mag with a constant change of pace. Keep up the good work, but...

The Worst from *Wizard*: The emphasis on Image Comics.

Marc Lirette
Quebec City, Canada

Pen Pals

Want to get in touch with your fellow comic fans? Or want them to touch you? Send your name, address, age, gender, and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o Wizard Press, at Magic Words's address on page 15. Hey, make a friend!

Chuck Delorme
Age: 23 Sex: Male
105 Sterling Ave. Apt. #2
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1Y 1P9
Likes: *Conan, Lobo, Batman*

Daniel Williams
Age: 16 Sex: Male
8819 Santa Fe Springs Rd.
Whittier, CA 90606
Likes: *Amazing Spider-Man, Uncanny X-Men, X-Factor*

Glenn Dunlap
Age: 31 Sex: Male
1883 Curtner Ave. #1
San Jose, CA 95124
Likes: *Darkstars, Sandman, Legion of Super-Heroes*

Armanel Demesa
Age: 16 Sex: Male
266 S. Siena St.
San Diego, CA 92114
Likes: *Hellblazer, Spawn, John Byrne's Next Men*

Magic Wizards,

A lot of lessons were learned in 1994 for comic publishers, and comic fans as well:

Lesson #1: Publishers found that it takes more than a 3-D, multi-chromium, super-lacquered, glazed cover to make a great comic. For examples, try *Gen*[13], *WetWorks, Spawn, Cyberforce, John Byrne's Next Men,* and *Savage Dragon.* So get a hint, Marvel!

Lesson #2: Image made Marvel shape up its act. Now Marvel is using better paper and better color separations, and calling them "deluxe" books. Image has been doing this all along. Thank you, Image!

Lesson #3: It has also been proven (by Dark Horse and Image again) that it takes more than a chain of fight scenes to make a great comic. Again I point out *Gen*[13] and *John Byrne's Next Men.* Yes, I am a Byrne victim.

Lesson #4: Female characters are no longer just supporting characters, but can hold up their own top-selling titles. Try *Vampirella, Shi, Lady Death,* and *She-Hulk* (but only when Byrned), for example.

Here is my wish list of things that I would like to see accomplished in comics in 1995:

1) Marvel should straighten out Wolverine; explain how he received his claws, clarify his past with more than "memory implants" or "he can't remember" explanations, and put the adamantium back in his bones!

2) Marvel should take the Comics Code Authority stamp off of the mutant titles and start illustrating more realistic fight scenes. I'm not bloodthirsty, but when Wolverine's claws slash someone open, it's only logical to see slash marks with blood escaping. At least shred his opponent's uniform! The Code is outdated. Drop it, Marvel!

3) *Wizard,* please get off the Spider-Clone's back! I think bringing back the clone was a great idea. It's fun to think, "What if there was another one of me running around?" So quit putting down a great idea. Also, if you don't like something like the Clone, then state why you don't like it. Just don't say that it's stupid or lame for no reason—say why it's stupid, or why it's the Mort of the Month. Act more like the professional publication that you claim to be.

4) I would also like to see Marvel loosen up a little and start doing more inter-company cross-overs, especially with Image. I would die to see Spawn vs. Spider-Man, the X-Men vs. WildC.A.T.s, or Wolverine versus WarBlade (a real Claws-R-Us storyline). The potential is unlimited!

5) I would love to see several characters come back, especially Longshot, Phoenix, and Magik. I would pay good money to see another *Longshot* limited series done by the same creative team that did the first one. Please hear me, Art Adams!

Jerry T. Perkins
Pueblo West, CO

The reason why we don't like the Spider-Clone story is as follows: It's yet another annoying example of comic book history revisionism. Marvel took a story almost 20 years old—a good story that made sense and had closure—and essentially told us, two decades after the fact, that it didn't happen that way. Another reason is that it's also an example of going to the well one too many times. Spidey is overexposed in the minds of many, with four main titles. Adding another Spider-Man only milks that cow dry.

But as to your Lesson #1 and the general comment that Marvel should "get a hint," methinks I notice a pattern developing here. You rip Marvel a new hole, and then spend the rest of your letter talking about Marvel. Despite all the crap that Marvel has been taking recently (some of it at our hands), Marvel's still first in terms of sales, and still first and foremost in everyone's mind, including ours. Even though many readers think Marvel is at a "low point" in its history, the company still cares about the characters and is sticking around, hoping for improvement. Marvel seems to be the publisher you love to hate these days, but you still love 'em.

Dear Magic Words,

The year is over, and I'm forced to admit that the comics industry continuously held my interest. In a year in which entertainment was severely thinned (Thanks, baseball! Thanks, hockey! Et tu, basketball?), the comics medium outdid itself by giving fans not only eye-popping artwork, but (finally!) some compelling storylines, too. In general, comics seem to be rising in all-around quality and effort, although there are always exceptions.

High Points of 1994:

1. Trend toward better stories, not simply eye-catching art and million-dollar covers.

2. Widespread recognition of such high quality black-and-white titles as *Bone, Wandering Star, Strangers in Paradise,* and *Starchild.*

3. Development of a plethora of comic book-related projects in the movies and on television.

4. Frank Miller's gusty and provocative keynote speech at the Diamond Retailer Seminar.

Low Points of 1994:

1. Demise or impeding death of Innovation, Majestic, Axis, Triumphant, Defiant, and Lightning.

2. Continuous increase in cover prices from almost every company.

3. Marvel's greedy attempt to monopolize the industry by saturating the market with an endless number of titles, jacking up the price of its most popular titles, and putting out a new card set every month.

4. A new web of lawsuits that may stall the production of the Spider-Man movie once again.

Best Comics of 1994:

1. *Marvels* mini-series. Simply the best since *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen.*

2. The aforementioned B&Ws. These comics speak for themselves.

3. *The Incredible Hulk.* Who'da thought the Hulk could be so fun to read?

4. *Flash,* especially issue #91. An impressive study of the Flash's power, and I gotta admit I get a kick out of watching Flash tutor a kid who's not only faster than him, but hyperactive, too.

Worst Comics of 1994:

1. The *Northstar* mini-series. Why would Marvel do any kind of a series about Northstar, then ignore the issue of him being gay? That's the only legitimate reason to make a series about this guy! Think about it, Marvel: BIG time publicity=BIG time controversy=BIG time sales. Cha-Ching!

2. *Green Lantern* #48-#50. In a year of trying to right continuity, DC makes perennial good guy Hal Jordan a cold-blooded killer!

3. All the *Venom* mini-series. Is anyone else sick of mini after mini of this "I can't decide if I'm a villain or hero" character?

4. *Choose-your-adjective Spider-Man.* Lifeless. Remember when Spider-Man had a human side that we all loved, laughed about, and cried for?

Wish List for 1995:

1. Collectors will stop buying 90% of

Spider-Clone ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

WHODUNNIT?
HOW THE FRAG WOULD I KNOW?
Alan Grant
Val Semeiks
John Dell
LOBO™
P.I.
A two-fisted five-parter!
Starting February in the monthly!
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the crap Marvel is dumping on the market, dealers will stop ordering 90% of the crap Marvel is dumping on the market, and Marvel will cancel 90% of the crap it is currently dumping on the market.

2. Collectors will spend all that extra money on more engrossing comics from smaller publishers that dealers are finally able to invest their money in, and the industry will flourish to untold heights with the shift in revenue, ushering in a new Golden Age. And *Bone* goes monthly.

How to make *Wizard* better in 1995:

Hire myself to write a piece in *Wizard* every month. Just a little piece? Guys?

Dane V. Hill
Charlottesville, VA

That's twice I've heard it now. I just may have to start reading *Bone, Wandering Star,* and *Strangers in Paradise.* And again with the Marvel-bashing (justifiably so in the *Northstar* area), despite the fact that Dane lists *Marvels* and *The Incredible Hulk* as two of the best titles in '94. Hmmm...

Dearest Wizard,

In regards to your request in issue #39, my thoughts on '94 and my wishes for 1995.

The Good: Bruce Wayne taking back the Knight (Get it?); the "Emerald Twilight" story and end result; allowing Nightwing to be Batman for a while; adding yet another X-title to the Marvel lineup; giving Jim Aparo a full-time job drawing *Green Arrow*; and *Wizard* covers.

The Bad: The *Spawn/Batman* story; the "climactic" ending to KnightsEnd; the *Batman/Spawn* story; whatever they're doing to Superman (Is he dead or alive?); whatever they're doing to Spider-Man (Is he real or a clone?).

My 1995 Wish List: Nightwing in his own ongoing series; a rematch between Batman and Bane; Spawn comics in stores on time; and Robin, Superboy, The Ray, and Damage teaming up against a Girl Scout troop, with the winner getting all the cookies!

That's it. See you in 1995, and I hope '94 was as good for you as it was for me.

Chip Moore
Frankfort, KY

Dear Wizard,

As for *Wizard* in 1995, there are a few things I think you could improve. For almost as long as I have been reading *Wizard,* you guys have been promising a writing department similar to your art departments "Drawing Board" and "Brutes and Babes," but I've yet to see anything of the sort. Get crackin'! And expand the size of *Wizard.* Give 'er more pages. If price is an issue, I wouldn't mind paying an extra buck for another hundred pages. It's well worth it.

Christopher Roesler
Sparks, NV

Hey, lookee that! We had an Ultraverse writing contest last issue! How's that for quick service?

I'd like to get a regular comic writing contest going, too, but the logistics of doing one are pretty difficult. We need something that's easy for people to participate in, a practical measure of writing ability, and easy to judge. Any ideas out there? We'd love to hear them.

Judas Traveller ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Dear Wizard,

Hats off to Crystal Alicea (Magic Words, #39) for pointing out what a copycat Marvel is, mimicking everything DC does with its heroes. Here's another example: When was the last time you saw a seven-foot tall, highly intelligent supervillain break into the local crazy house, free all the worst criminals that the resident hero had so carefully put there, and then sit back and observe said hero as he tries to cope with them all at once? Sounds kind of like the recent "Power and Responsibility" storyline in the Spider-Man books, which echoes something that went on in one of DC's top stories about a year ago: "Knightfall."

That leads me into my comments about the high and low points in comics in 1994. The previously mentioned "Power and Responsibility" story in *Spider-Man* was my low point. Not only was the basic idea pretty much a rip-off of something DC did—and much better—with Batman, but the story and artwork both sucked, which made the entire thing a big loser in my book.

My high point was the entire Knightfall/KnightQuest/KnightsEnd story arc in the Batman titles. Not only did it get me interested in collecting comics, but it showed me how far comic books have come since my childhood days in the '60s, with an excellent story that also addressed social issues such as child abuse and interracial relations. The artwork was great, and the final chapter in *Legends of the Dark Knight* #63 was superb!

The worst trend in the industry is that there is an overabundance of two things—too many teams of mutants fighting evil, and too many superheroes undergoing life crises all at the same time. The best trend is the maturity and intelligence being shown in many comic stories today, and the superb artwork that has come as a result of Image leading the way.

M. Murray
Niagara Falls, Canada

Thanks for all the picks, readers! And just in case anybody out there is wondering, my personal "Best of 1994" would have to include the whole honkin' Vertigo line, Dark Horse's *Instant Piano* (read it or I'll come to your house and shave your body), any combination of Joe Lansdale with Tim Truman (preferably with Sam Glanzman, as well), and a great Superman book every week for only $1.50.

My "Worst of 1994" includes the asinine killer clown that popped up in *Bloodshot* #19, anatomically-impossible comic book breasts, seeing 16 feet of Marvel comics on a rack that look like they're lit up like a Christmas tree, and the *Violator* mini-series.

Dear Wizard,

I read *Wizard* all the time and I have a few questions.

1) Who judges your competitions?
2) Do you ever make mistakes?
3) Who owns *Wizard?*

Paul A.T. Nguyen
Victoria, Australia

I write for *Wizard* all the time and I have three answers.

1) The staff selects finalists for "Letter Art" and "The Drawing Board" and gives them to wacky Arlene So, who has the final say as to who's number one. Trivia contests are determined by a random drawing among all correct entries for the winners, and random-drawing contests involve, simply, random drawings.

2) Yeah, but we usually just cut 'em up into about six different pieces and dump 'em in unmarked graves in Jersey.

3) Until the republic of the working class and economic liberty truly comes about and we can all bask in the warm light of solidarity with our proletarian brothers and sisters, *Wizard* is owned by Gareb Shamus Enterprises.

Steven Winer
Age: 12 Sex: Male
675 Conklin St. Apt. 2B
Farmingdale, NY 11735
Likes: *Amazing Spider-Man, X-Men, Aliens vs. Predator*

John Gongliewski
Age: 14 Sex: Male
207 Prynn St.
Peckville, PA 18452
Likes: *WildC.A.T.s, Spawn, Cyberforce*

Philip Marachilian
Age: 14 Sex: Male
402 Stobe Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10306
Likes: *Silver Surfer,* Liefeld titles, *Cable*

Laurie Sugg
Age: 21 Sex: Female
P.O. Box 9644 c/o APSU
Clarksville, TN 37044
Likes: *Wolverine, Uncanny X-Men, Namor*

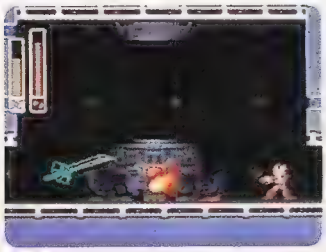
Nowen Fernandez
Age: 14 Sex: Male
137 Falconridge Gardens N.E.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T3V 2B9
Likes: *Spawn, X-Men, Trencher*

Liz Adams
Age: 13 Sex: Female
6900 N. Chaparral Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85718
Likes: *Ultraman,* Superman titles, *Icon*

Clint Guenther
Age: 13 Sex: Male
1319 Ave. Y. North
Saskatoon, Sask., Canada
57L 3L9
Likes: *Savage Dragon, ShadowHawk,* All Image titles

Mih. Usala Damiano
Age: 21 Sex: Male
via Fermi
3 Cagliari 09126 CA
Sardegna, Italy
Likes: *Sandman, Swamp Thing, Morbius*

ARE YOU THE HUNTER OR THE HUNTED?



The amazing new CAPCOM C-4 graphics chip makes Mega Man X's duel with the renegade sword an all too real slash-fest.

In the abandoned Reploid factory, "X" better go for the head of the Maverick Hunter or get crushed into scrap metal.

Take the ultimate ride on the Mobile Attack Cycle and eliminate the Mavericks from behind, where they least expect it.

Just when Dr. Cain and Mega Man X thought the rebellion was over, a new uprising is in the works in an abandoned factory. While the X-Hunters keep "X" occupied fighting Mavericks, they're devoting every second to collecting pieces of someone or something he thought was long gone. "X" must use the powers he gains from the X-Hunters, and vehicles like his Mobile Attack Cycle, in his all-out battle to end their threat forever. Or face total "X"-tinction.

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Ask the WIZARD

Q: What is the Periodic symbol for adamantium?
—B. Schwaner, Covington, LA
A: *X, I'd imagine.*

Q: Why doesn't Cyclops just wear ruby quartz contact lenses?
—S. Wakner, Valencia, CA
A: That's a pretty good question. So good, in fact, that we went straight to the horse's mouth and called *X-Men* writer Fabian Nicieza over at Marvel, and here's what we got: "Because the force of the blasts themselves would push them out. The lenses are so thick on the glasses in the visor, that it's enough to diffuse it so that it doesn't push it out."

Q: If Daredevil is blind, how did he make his new costume?
—D. Mathews, Cookeville, TN
A: *We're passing the buck on this one to Dean Bailey of Pensacola, FL. Write in and let us know, Dean.*

Q: Are Wolverine's adamantium claws a match for the Ginsu World Class™ steak knife?
—M. Ruggiero, Poway, CA
A: *Wolvie can cut through Iron Man, and still slice through a tomato. So, yeah!*

Q: Now that *Zero Hour*'s over, what is so different about the DC Universe?
—M. Callie, Clifton Park, NY
A: *More Chunky Chips Ahoy™ cookies for everyone.*

Ask the Pros

Hey, Neal Adams...
"Are you ever going to go back to Batman?"
—B. Tarris, Salem, OR

Photo: Al Ortega

Have a question that's bugging the heck out of you and that no one can answer? Heck, the Wizard can answer anything. Just send your stumpers to Ask the Wizard, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

Photo: Al Ortega

Dear Wizard,
Just out of curiosity, what does John Byrne snack on? Oh, please quench my thirst for knowledge!

Chris Barton
Fountain Valley, CA

According to Mr. Byrne, "My soda of choice would have to be caffeine-free Coke Classic™, and when it comes to snack foods, I'm a Cheez Doodles™ man."

By the way, this is the last John Byrne culinary question we will accept. So cut it out.

Hawkeye ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Dear Wizard,
About the ten battles that have never been seen article you ran in issue #39, let me tell you that Hawkeye would whup Green Arrow hands down!

Dave Lewis
Canfield, OH

Without a doubt, this is the overwhelming choice for the one battle that everyone disagreed with. But I stand my ground! Green Arrow is much smarter than Hawkeye, and he'd use his wits to his advantage to win.

Dear Wizard Dudes,
In *Wizard* #39 you said that the Hulk was the strongest man in the comic world. What about Superman, Prime, or *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief Patrick McCallum?

Mark Arnold
Marlboro, TN

OK, let me clarify: The Hulk is physically the strongest, Superman has the strongest code of ethics, Prime has the strongest wardrobe of the bunch, and Pat McCallum is the strongest smelling.

Daredevil ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Wise and Almighty Wizard,
In a previous issue of *Wizard*, in the "Wizard Wonders" section, you ask how Daredevil, the blind superhero, knows when he's done wiping his butt. I am proud to announce that in order to keep a sense of reality in the Marvel Universe, I have come up with an answer. Daredevil, having super-hearing, merely wisps his hand by his butt, creating a wind that will create sound waves revealing to him an image, much like a sonogram, of any foulage that still remains. Having years of practice, Daredevil knows what a clean butt sounds like.

If the people at Marvel aren't satisfied with that answer, then I have another. Daredevil does not wipe his butt. He does not care. He is the Man Without Fear.

Dean Bailey
Pensacola, FL

Yowza! And the first Bunny Award for Letter-Writing Excellence goes out to Dean in Pensacola. For showing devotion above and beyond the call of duty to exposing these comic mysteries, Dean will receive the mysterious Bunny Award. What is it? Win one and find out. Keep those cards and letters coming, sports fans, and you, too, could be a lucky winner.

Dear Wizard,
My friend and I thought we'd show some of our creativity and love of Image comics with the following top ten list:

The Top 10 Reasons Image Comics Are Always Late

10: Every issue quality checked by Tony Lobito himself. (heh-heh)

9: Capullo constantly spilling drinks on pages of *Spawn*.

8: McFarlane's mommy wants him home by 9:00.

7: Raging kegger every Tuesday and Thursday.

6: It takes time to rip off Marvel's characters.

5: Sometimes even Liefeld has trouble getting up in the morning.

4: Those damned Marvel saboteurs!

3: Even McFarlane is gettin' tired of Spawn.

2: Constant fighting over the corner office.

1: Two words: McFarlane, diarrhea.

Kevin Flanigan and Chad Vincent
Wenonah, NJ

David Letterman, move over! Kevin and Chad are in the house!

Lucky ™ & © General Mills Inc.

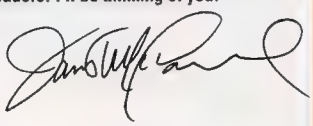
Dear Wizard,

Apple Jacks™ may not taste like apples or jacks and Grape Nuts™ may not taste like grapes or nuts, but I've discovered that Lucky Charms™ do in fact taste like leprechauns.

Nick Miller
Bolingbreak, IL

My only question for you, Nick, is how do you know what leprechauns taste like? Sounds like you've got a social life that's a little more...interesting than mine.

It is with heavy heart that I close this month's Magic Words. I will not be back next month. I'm splitting from the band, because my creative freedom has been suppressed ever since Editor Brian Cunningham started dating Yoko. Nah, that's not it. I'm taking a month off because I've got a lot of things to do (pick my toenails, listen to Tito Puente albums), and I'm falling behind. Hopefully, a one-month break will help me keep my tenuous grip on sanity. Next month, I leave you to the tender mercies of...Doug "Bucky" Goldstein, the original Magic Words guy (and current Wizard Press Production Director), who enjoyed a celebrated run on this column for the magazine's first 11 issues. The scars have almost healed to the point where he thinks he can handle it again. Let's be careful out there, Doug. So, think of me often next month, readers. I'll be thinking of you.



Jim McLauchlin, editor-by-day at our companion publication, Collector's Sportslook, *thinks Daryl Hannah just might be the worst actress of all time.*

Send your letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

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Enveloping LETTER ART!

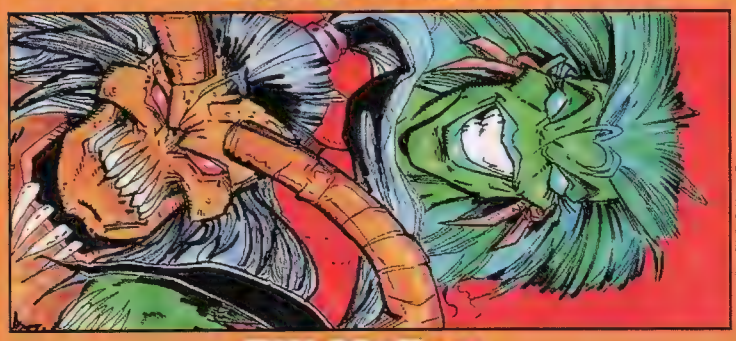
When you're dropping us a line, show us your drawing skill by doodlin' up your envelope somethin' fancy! Winners this month receive a *Gen*[13] #1 signed by Brandon Choi, a *Marvels* #0 signed by Alex Ross, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared (signed by the swingin' *Wizard* staff), and a happenin' *Wizard* T-shirt! The creator of the best envelope wins all that cool stuff, *plus* an original Spawn sketch by Greg Capullo, which Greg donated for this contest. (You're the Motts™, Greg!) (Hey, artists—put your name and address on the **BACK** of the envelope!)

Hellboy ™ & © Mike Mignola

Todd Bowlin
Athens, TN

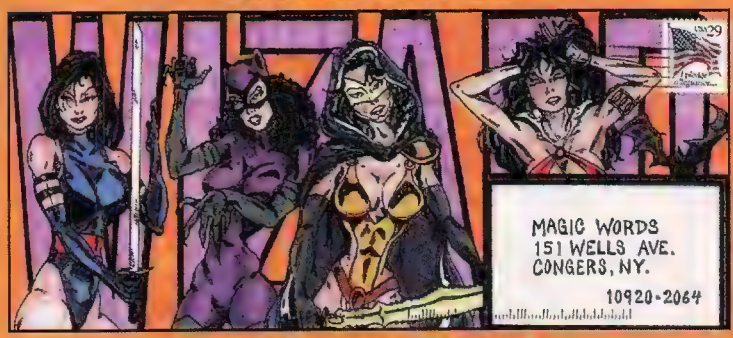
Tick & Arthur ™ & © Ben Edlund

Kent Clark
Broken Arrow, OK



Melting Pot ™ & © Kevin Eastman

Bill McEvoy
Rowland Hts., CA



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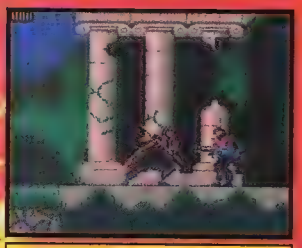
Sgt. James Norris
Ft. Riley, KS

MARVEL COMICS

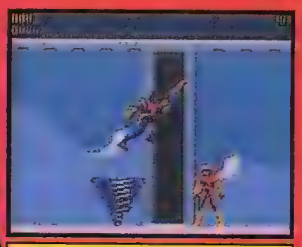
X-MEN®

GAMESMASTER'S LEGACY™ ON SEGA™ GAME GEAR™!

The lethal labyrinth of The Pyramids holds a host of deadly surprises for Rogue - and hidden power-ups as well!



Gambit's staff allows him to fight at any distance. Play your cards carefully, especially with Fabian Cortez in town.



Use Bishop to dodge the deadly tornadoes of Sienna Blaze, and take the fight to her.

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WIZARD NEWS

Compiled by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

MAKE MINE MALIBU

Just in case you've figured out how the October "Marvelution" is breaking down and shaping up, add this to the soup: **Marvel Entertainment Group** has acquired **Malibu Comics Entertainment**.

Malibu was founded by president, and now Marvel Comics senior executive vice president, **Scott Rosenberg** in 1986. Malibu commands about five percent of the $1 billion domestic comic book industry, making it—depending on whom you talk to—the fourth largest comic book publisher in the U.S. Home to the popular **Ultraverse** superhero line, the creator-owned **Bravura** line, and licensed books such as *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Mortal Kombat*, and *BattleTech*, Malibu is headquartered in Calabasas, Calif.

SPIDER-MAN ™ & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

(From left) Scott Rosenberg, Marvel's Terry Stewart, and Spider-Man, give thumbs up to Marvel's acquisition of Malibu.

"Marvel liked the state-of-the-art computer coloring group that Scott has developed," said **Terry Stewart**, Marvel Comics president and chief operating officer, "and what it could mean to the upgrading of quality in Marvel comics. We were attracted to the Ultraverse characters, and the organization that Scott had built...partly because, in the future, it will help us launch things like **Excelsior Comics** [the previously announced West Coast-based comics imprint to be headed by Marvel publisher **Stan Lee**].

"Malibu gives Marvel a strong West Coast presence," Stewart continued, "and provides a center of gravity in a part of the country where a lot of freelancers live."

"Malibu's licensed products were appealing, but the characters, the organization, [and] the West Coast location were more compelling," stated Stewart.

As to Bravura: "By definition, these are books by freelancers," he said. "We can't say that we bought into that."

According to the terms of acquisition, Malibu will remain an autonomous subsidiary, free to make its own editorial and product decisions. "In Malibu, Marvel has an alternative voice in the marketplace," Stewart stated flatly. "Scott's business is to be run under his guidance alone."

This does not, however, mean that the universes will never meet. "Marvel and Malibu characters will play with one another," promised Stewart. "We don't want to do it too much, but we want to establish some sort of relationship. You might see a Marvel char-

MALIBU CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

VALIANT GAINS NEW IMAGE

In March 1995, **Voyager Communications**, the parent company of **Valiant**, will officially cease to exist. In its place will be **Acclaim Comics**, named after the electronic gaming company which purchased Voyager in 1994 for a reported $60 million.

The change, however, is far more than in name only. Acclaim Comics will publish three imprints: Valiant, **Windjammer**, and **Armada**. Windjammer will be a creator-owned line and will actually launch in February. Armada will be Acclaim's licensed properties line, launching in March.

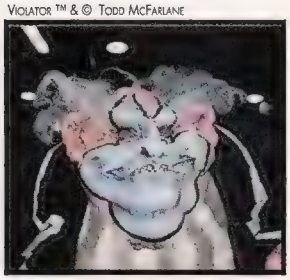
In addition to the new imprints, Valiant will remain a superhero line, but will gain a major facelift with arguably the largest influx of talent since the formation of Image Comics in 1992. **Bart Sears** (*Eclipso*), **Dan Jurgens** (*Superman*, *Zero Hour*), **Norm Breyfogle** (*Prime*), **Paul Gulacy** (*Batman vs. Predator II*), **Jackson Guice** (*Action Comics*), **Ron Marz** (*Green Lantern*), **Mike Manley** (*Batman*), and **Andy Smith** (*Quasar*) have all been signed to long-term contracts, with some being exclusive.

"**Birthquake**" is Valiant's big March promotion, which, according to marketing VP **Marty Stever**, will "reinvent the Valiant Universe." Eight titles will go to a twice-monthly publishing schedule, two will remain monthly,

VALIANT CONTINUES ON PAGE 18

Sean Young spotted on set of Batman Forever. "See? I'd make a great Robin," exclaimed confused actress.

VIOLATOR ™ & © TODD MCFARLANE



Comic fan interviewed at local con. "Us comic con guys get a bad rep. We really do bathe," insisted ill-groomed comic freak.

Admiral Ackbar invited as guest speaker at Red Lobster. "It's a trap!" exclaimed crustacean, moments before being boiled and eaten.

MALIBU CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

acter in a Malibu book within the first months of 1995," he hinted. According to a recent press release from Malibu, that event is happening very soon: Marvel's superhero **Thor** will be appearing in Malibu's ***Godwheel*** mini-series beginning in January, along with a mystery villain. In the press release, *Godwheel* editor **Dan Danko** said, "We aren't saying how long Thor will be staying, but he will be setting into motion the plot points that will wind through the Ultraverse until the end of 1995, leading to other joint Marvel/Malibu projects."

Does this mean Malibu characters could be heading for the House of Ideas? "We don't have plans at this time," said Rosenberg, "but it depends on what happens." However, it was stated in the release that "Thor's appearance in *Godwheel* will have lasting repercussions in the Marvel Universe." It should be also noted that both the Ultraverse and Marvel Universe will not co-exist in one universe.

Malibu creators are generally upbeat about the takeover. "It's not like the Republican changeover in Congress, where they've announced there will be a new policy," explained Harris Miller, attorney and agent to many Bravura and Ultraverse creators. "My clients who are currently publishing books under Bravura are going to be comfortable if **Dave Olbrich** [Malibu's publisher] and his people are in place."

"Marvel has promised us that the integrity of the characters will be maintained," said **Len Strazewski**, co-writer of Malibu's *Prime*.

"I'm very confident about the whole thing," said **James Robinson**, writer of Malibu's *Firearm*.

"We Ultraverse creators have the same deal," *Hardcase* writer **James Hudnall** posted on CompuServe, "but now we know that Malibu has more money to pursue an aggressive marketing of the Ultraverse. How this will pan out in the long run is anyone's guess, but for now I'm optimistic."

"The fact is," said Bravura creator **Howard Chaykin**, "it's really too soon to call. I'm curious to see who's still working at Malibu in six months, and I'm interested in seeing what Malibu is still putting out after the next six months."

"Malibu now has Marvel's presence to help us make better deals for ourselves and our creators," said Rosenberg. The purchase will not affect Malibu's existing agreements, such as the Columbia Pictures project *Man in Black*, toy deals with Galoob, and trading card agreements with SkyBox. Marvel will distribute Malibu's books, and according to Rosenberg, "We are going to do a lot of coordination with Marvel." However, Stewart clarified, "Coordination does not mean that we'll do the same thing."

"I think it will be business as usual," said **Steve Gerber**, writer of Malibu's *Sludge*, "though, I am looking forward to the Howard the Duck/Mantra team-up."

—Ruth Morrison

VALIANT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

and eight will be canceled. The semi-monthly books will be ***Bloodshot*** (still written by Kevin VanHook and penciled alternately by Breyfogle and Sean Chen), ***Eternal Warrior*** (written by John Ostrander and penciled alternately by Guice and Gulacy), ***Magnus: Robot Fighter*** (written by Tony Bedard and penciled alternately by George Seravia and Kevin Kobasic), ***Ninjak*** (written by Jorge González, with art by Manley), ***Timewalker*** (written by popular science fiction writers, with art by Anthony Castrillo), ***Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*** (written by Tim Truman and penciled alternately by Rags Morales and another artist yet to be determined), ***The Visitor*** (written by VanHook and penciled alternately by Bernard Chang and Luke Ross), and ***X-O Manowar*** (written by Marz and penciled alternately by Sears and Smith). The two monthly titles are ***Solar, Man of the Atom*** (written and penciled by Jurgens) and ***Shadowman*** (still written and penciled by Bob Hall).

Bart Sears returns as penciler of X-O Manowar.

On the canceled list are *Armorines, Geomancer, Harbinger, H.A.R.D. Corps, Psi-Lords, Rai, The Second Life of Doctor Mirage,* and *Secret Weapons*. Characters and plotlines from these titles will continue in the remaining books.

For the Armada line, two four-issue mini-series based on the popular *Magic: the Gathering* card game will be introduced. Both *Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage* and *Magic: The Gathering—Ice Age* will incorporate the game system in each storyline, and the first few issues will come with an upcoming *Magic* card.

The Windjammer line debuts in February with an ongoing monthly title, ***Bar Sinister***, and an eight-issue semi-monthly limited series called ***Starslayer: The Director's Cut***, both written by **Mike Grell**. *Bar Sinister* is a spin-off from his Image book ***Shaman's Tears***, about a group of genetically engineered human/animal hybrids set loose in a world that never wanted them. The art team will be Rick Hoberg (*The Strangers*), Tim Burgard, and Brian Snoddy.

Starslayer: The Director's Cut retells and revises the swashbuckling science fiction series—which was originally published by Pacific Comics (28 issues were also published by First)—re-dialogued by Grell, who also provides some new art, and re-colored by Rob Prior. The first and last issues will be all-new material written by Grell and drawn by S. Clarke Hawbaker (*Nomad*). In April, writer-artist **Neal Adams** debuts his two Windjammer creator-owned mini-series: ***Knighthawk*** and ***Samuree***. It is currently unknown as to how this affects his publishing company, Continuity Comics.

Stever reports that negotiations are under way with two other creators, and that the company is dedicated to expanding the imprint further. Stever points out that Voyager/Acclaim is not downsizing, but restructuring for a changing market; in order to remain vital and fresh.

—Paul J. Grant

COMPUTER COLOR for HOME USE

Aspiring comic book artists and colorists with a Macintosh computer now have the ability to computer-color their work like the professionals, thanks to DS Design's **Colorize 2.0** software.

Colorize was designed specifically for coloring scanned images, cartoons, and other bitmap images, while preserving clarity and high definition. The software automatically traps color as the user paints; trapping can also be added to an image after coloring. Images can be saved as EPS, TIFF, or Photoshop files.

Colorize requires a Macintosh with System 7 and is native for the Power Mac. The list price for Version 2.0 is $495. For more info, contact DS Design, 2440 SW Cary Pkwy., #210, Cary, NC 27513; or call 1-800-745-4037.

Life After BONGO

Having left their positions as editors-in-chief at **Bongo Comics**, publishers of ***Simpsons Comics*** and other Simpsons-related titles, **Steve** and **Cindy Vance** are actively pursuing more comics work—but first, they are helping out a friend, Gary Walkow, on a movie project, which will delay their comics deals for a month or so, according to Steve Vance. Walkow's modern-day film adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, the independently produced feature, does not currently have a distribution deal.

"We went straight from the last comic to this, so there hasn't been much of a pause for reflection yet," Vance laughed. "We've gotten calls from a few publishers and we're talking about stuff. Before we got into Bongo, we were freelance graphic designers, and we'll be getting back to doing more of that stuff. All the other projects are still in the talking stages."

The last Vance-produced Bongo comic was *Radioactive Man* #6, marking 18 separate issues of Simpsons stories coming from the man-and-wife team, including issues of *Simpsons Comics*, *Itchy & Scratchy Comics*, *Bartman*, and *Radioactive Man*. The Vances, and art director/writer Bill Morrison, won an Eisner Award earlier this year for Best Short Story for "The Amazing Colossal Homer" in *Simpsons Comics* #1.

As for Bongo, Morrison and managing editor Jason Grode will oversee the visuals and writing of future Simpsons comic book adventures, along with Simpsons designer Mili Smythe.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

The MARVELUTION Continues

In other Marvel news, the aftermath of October's editorial shake-up continues. Marvel Comics president **Terry Stewart** announced that former editor-in-chief **Tom DeFalco** would be leaving the Marvel staff at the end of the year. "Tom wants to commit himself to a full-time freelance effort," said Stewart. DeFalco has been a Marvelite since 1980, and the company's editor-in-chief for the past seven and a half years. It had previously been announced that DeFalco would be a senior vice president overseeing global operations. He could not be reached for comment.

Marvel has also announced which titles would fall into the bailiwick of each of the new editorial directors. As expected, **Bob Harras** will handle all the X-Men and X-Men-related titles, while **Bob Budiansky** will supervise all the Spider-Man titles, including various Venom mini-series. **Mark Gruenwald** will have a huge group of books, including the "Marvel Classic" books, such as *Avengers*, *Captain America*, and *Thor*; the Iron Man group, including *Force Works*; and the Fantastic Force/Cosmic Powers group, which includes *Fantastic Four* and related titles, as well as *Silver Surfer* and *Warlock and the Infinity Watch*. **Bobbie Chase's** group of books is considered the "Edge" titles, with books such as *The Incredible Hulk*, the Midnight Sons line, the Punisher line, and the 2099 line in her stable. Lastly, **Carl Potts** will have authority over the licensed "General Entertainment" books, including the Disney, Barbie, and Conan titles.

—Ruth Morrison

TANK GIRL™

In The Spunk Tank, Hangin' With A Roo Chum.

She's Tank Girl. And she's going to blow away America this March in a mondo motion picture starring Lori Petty, Malcom McDowell and Iced-T as one of the Rippers (half-man, half-kangaroo mutants). Plus, special effects by the FX master, Stan Winston.

And Comic Images presents this futuristic femme fatale in a sensational 90-card series of dazzling stills from this much-anticipated futuristic action/adventure flick. A flick with a monster multimillion dollar ad and promotion budget.

Tank Girl and her life-on-the-edge attitude will soon be rolling your way.

It pays to make friends with her.

- Spectacular 90-card series.
- Contains shots from the film & the Deadline Publications' comic.
- 6 MagnaChrome™ comic art chase cards.
- Major movie and promotional tie-ins.

COMIC IMAGES

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EXTREME Announces "NEW ORDER"

Despite previous announcements, **Rob Liefeld's** Extreme Studios, whose books are published through Image Comics, has altered its future plans. Instead of only releasing four titles, Extreme's plans following this January's "Extreme Sacrifice" crossover call for an array of new titles, and a roster of top industry writers who will chart the course of the lineup's **"New Order."**

The New Order will also signal a new synergy between Liefeld and Image co-founder **Jim Valentino**, who takes over as the regular writer on Extreme's flagship title, ***Youngblood***.

Leading the pack of new ongoing titles is ***Prophet***, the popular character who, under the pencil of newcomer **Stephen Platt**, will launch a new #1 issue of his solo series. **Chuck Dixon** (*Detective Comics, The Punisher*) will write the book.

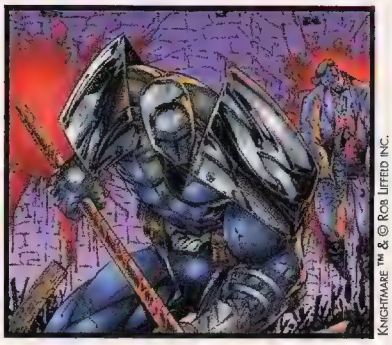
Jo Duffy (*Catwoman*) will handle the writing chores on another female headliner, ***Glory***, which features the character who fought alongside Youngblood's Die Hard during World War II. The artwork, as announced, will be by *Wonder Woman*'s **Mike Deodato Jr.**

Glory will also appear in ***Brigade***, which becomes an Avengers-style book featuring an all-new lineup under the direction of veteran writer **Marv Wolfman** (*The New Titans*) and artists Anthony Winn and Marlo Alquiza. In addition to Glory, the new Brigade roster includes Liefeld's Troll, Roman, and Supreme, Valentino's ShadowHawk, and Erik Larsen's Vanguard.

Supreme, by Gary Carlson, Cedric Nocon, and Norm Rapmund, will careen toward the events depicted in *Supreme* #25, while ***The Legend of Supreme***, from writer **Keith Giffen**, will reveal key elements from Supreme's past.

On the mini-series front, acclaimed writer **Alan Moore** (*Violator*) will script a ***Badrock/Violator*** mini which pits the hellion against Extreme Studios's most popular Youngblood character.

Bloodstrike, starring Extreme's one-man strike team, will continue to be handled by Robert Napton and Karl Altstaetter. Also continuing in the wake of "Extreme Sacrifice" is ***Newmen*** by Eric Stephenson, Todd Nauck, and Larry Stucker.



Knightmare is one of four new characters featured in Extreme's New Order.

Also in the New Order spotlight are four Extreme titles, including a pair of brand-new characters: ***Knightmare***, from artist **Marat Mychaels**, which tells the story of a Mafia hitman who discovers his crime family's plan to use nuclear weapons against the American government; and ***Mark 5***, from writers **Tom and Mary Bierbaum** (*Legionnaires*) with Todd Nauck and Danny Miki, in which a talisman of power in the battle between Order and Chaos falls into the wrong hands to create a new hero. In the spring, creator Dave Cockrum's **Futurians** return to comics, this time by writers Giffen and Stephenson, and artist Mychaels; plotter Giffen will update the heroes and integrate them into Image continuity. Also slated for spring is a **Badrock** ongoing series by Liefeld and Stephenson.

As for the previously announced Liefeld-**Jim Shooter** collaboration for future issues of *Youngblood*, Extreme editor Stephenson said that the studio has been unable to reach him, and is hoping they can work together at some point in the future, but "right now, we're more than happy with the team we've got."

—Andrew Steven Harris

COMPANY UPDATES

ARCHIE COMICS
In the aftermath of the "Love Showdown," involving Archie, Betty, and Veronica, the victor, Cheryl Blossom, gets her own special in February.

BLACKOUT COMICS
Debuting in March is *Lady Vampré*, a two-issue series about an immortal female, by Bob Berry...In April is *Ms. Cyanide & Ice*, a three-ish series about a pair of detectives who try to stop global domination.

CALIBER PRESS
All of Kabuki's previous one-shot appearances will lead up to her *Kabuki: Circle of Blood* mini-series starting in January. In this one, she continues to keep the Yakuza in check and politicians honest.

CHAOS! COMICS
In February is *Lady Death: Between Heaven & Hell*, where Lucifer's former sweetie Purgatori, another Bad Girl, will be introduced. This one's by regulars Brian Pulido, Steven Hughes, and Jason Jensen.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Expect a new name and facelift for Comics' Greatest World in April, which will be spearheaded with *Ghost* #1 that month...Len Kaminski will begin writing *The Machine* with #7, which ships in early summer...Also relaunching is *Barb Wire* with a #1 in May; Jo Duffy writes it and Andrew Robinson draws.

DC COMICS
Steven Grant and Mike Zeck, the team that produced the first *Punisher* mini-series for Marvel, are doing the two-part "Criminals" story in *Legends of the Dark Knight* #69-70 for February. The story has Bats going undercover in a prison.

ENTITY COMICS
Joel Orbeta has been selected as the artist of the all-new *Zen Intergalactic Ninja* series slated for March.

IMAGE COMICS
WarBlade: Endangered Species, the four-issue mini-series teaming WildStorm's WarBlade and Top Cow's Ripclaw, begins in January. The first ish, which originally had a price of $2.95, has been reduced to $2.50.

LIGHTNING COMICS
Vengeance of Dreadwolf #1, which ships in February, reveals the origin of Dreadwolf's curse.

MALIBU COMICS
The 13-year-old stuck with Prime's powers, Elven, will gain her own mini-series in February, courtesy of Len Strazewski, Aaron Lopresti, and Hilary Barta...The *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—The Maquis* three-ish mini-series will serve as a bridge between Malibu's *DS9* comic series and that month's ongoing *Star Trek: Voyager* series.

TEKNO•COMIX
Shipping in March is *Neil Gaiman's Wheel of Worlds—The Zero Issue*, which provides background history for Gaiman's *Mr. Hero* series. The issue will also introduce Lady Justice, a force of justice embodied by a mysterious woman, and Adam Cain, an eternal wanderer who may be mankind's last hope.

TOPPS COMICS
The Frankenstein-Dracula War #1 (of 3) starts in February, as both fight for supreme power in Europe.

VALIANT
Valiant's first computer-colored title will be *The Visitor*, starting with the first issue. According to Valiant, the company is moving towards more computer coloring in the future.

VEROTIK
The 56-page *Death Dealer* #1, starring Frank Frazetta's iconic figure from his famous 1973 painting, will ship in February, by Glenn Danzig and Simon Bisley.

WARP GRAPHICS
Steve Blevins becomes the new regular artist on *Elfquest: Hidden Years* #19, which ships in late January.

HANES HEARKENS Back to Classic Caniff

A "natural successor to *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*." A "grown-up *Jonny Quest*." Those are just some of the descriptions applied to Rob Hanes, star of writer/artist Randy Reynaldo's ***Adventure Strip Digest***.

Reynaldo, a great fan of classic adventure comic strips such as Milt Caniff's *Terry* and Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs and Captain Easy*, originally developed his globe-trotting hero for *Rob Hanes* #1, a self-published title that received little attention in 1991. It reverted to small-press, mail-order-only status as *Adventure Strip Digest* (vol. 1) for five issues, and now Reynaldo has decided the time is right to get back into the direct market.

But why did a 32-year-old comics creator, born two decades after the heyday of this style of comics, decide to do an adventure strip? "The topicality of it always appealed to me," Reynaldo replied. "When I read *Terry and the Pirates* or *Steve Canyon*, I always liked the connection to the real world and current events. I think it made it very immediate and created a sense of urgency for the reader. That's what I want to do with Rob Hanes."

Reynaldo plans to produce three issues a year, with the second issue due in January. But he said the work will not stand still. "I want to make the layouts more dynamic. In the first issue, it's a fairly straight-forward grid, but the second and third issues will show more dynamic page designs," he admitted. "I also still think I'm a little too plot-oriented. I go from A to B and I kind of stick to that. I'd like to focus a little more on Rob and develop the supporting characters as well. I like doing short back-up stories, that create opportunities to showcase the characters and use a little more humor."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

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Adventurer Rob Hanes is back in his own comic.

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Go, Joe! But Where?

Despite a confident announcement by Extreme Studios honcho **Rob Liefeld**, it seems that the adventures of America's favorite toy soldier, **G.I. Joe**, are not yet definitely moving to the pages of an Extreme-produced title.

Word leaked out in October that Extreme did not have the license for the Hasbro line of action figures locked up, and that other publishers were also discussing a possible deal for the venerable fighting men. Actually, Hasbro says the toy line is now being handled by its **Kenner** division, negating earlier reports which state that the entire G.I. Joe line is being discontinued.

Until recently, one of the publishers competing with Extreme for the G.I. Joe rights was **Top Cow Productions**, the studio owned by Liefeld's Image-mate, **Marc Silvestri**. In November, however, Top Cow spokesman **Brad Foxhoven** told *Wizard*, "We've dropped out of the negotiations for G.I. Joe. We've decided to take our own toy line elsewhere, and that meant a change in our prospective relationship with Kenner."

On the other hand, Extreme's **Matt Hawkins** was quite positive that, despite Liefeld's possibly premature announcement, his studio was first in line to acquire the G.I. Joe license. "We're still in the negotiation phase with Hasbro, and I don't think there's anyone else pursuing it," he said. "Hasbro was pretty confident about going with us. Rob was just letting people know what he was working on."

Still, the manufacturer of G.I. Joe isn't talking—at least, not much. In mid-October, Kenner spokesperson **Cricket Newman** promised an announcement before the end of November. "We're in discussion with other publishers right now. There's no sense in saying who at this point. If you can wait six weeks—at maximum—I'll have a solid answer. There's no point in speculating, when the real answer is that close." As of press time, there was still no announcement from Hasbro/Kenner.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

DARK HORSE Paints It BLACK

Colors in Black, a four-issue, full-color, monthly mini-series in which a variety of creators explore the often controversial and always difficult areas of race and race relations, will serve as the centerpiece of **Dark Horse Comics's** Comics from Spike imprint when the first issue ships in March.

™ & © Dark Horse Comics

The cover to Colors in Black *#1*

Comics from Spike is a joint venture between Dark Horse and film industry iconoclast **Spike Lee**, designed "to bring new voices into comics, voices which are different and thought-provoking," according to Dark Horse brand manager for licensed books Chuck Matthews III. "The book is a reflection of Dark Horse's commitment to producing the most diverse line of quality comics in the industry."

Colors in Black, according to creative director Scott Tolson, will try to provide some answers to Rodney King's famous question: "Can't we all just get along?" "Our intention is to tell stories which reveal how we are all alike and yet, all dissimilar, and how the things which make us dissimilar are in fact our strengths, those aspects which make us individuals," Tolson explained. "We may not all want to get along, but we all have to get along, so why not try to get along?"

Most of the primary creators involved are relatively unknown to the average comics reader. Tolson has done some work for Caliber Press in the past; writer Brian McDonald and artist Wayne Cash produced the acclaimed *Harry the Cop* for Slave Labor (McDonald also wrote an issue of Milestone Media's *Hardware*); writer Jason Lamb's "The Bad Rap Song," which serves as the introduction to the anthology in the opening issue, will be his first published work, and art director Greg Simanson is also new to the industry.

Among more familiar names involved with the project are writer Sarah (*Black Canary*) Byam, whose "Larry Can't Wash It Off" appears in *Colors of Black* #2, and artist Christopher (*Enemy*) Schenck, who illustrates Lamb's "The Red Hot Pizza Girls" in the initial issue.

—Jack Curtin

ROBERT BLOCH Dies at 76

The passing of author **Robert Bloch** on September 23 brought the curtain down on the Golden Age of supernatural horror fiction. Though best known for his book ***Psycho***, which Alfred Hitchcock filmed in 1960, Bloch's award-winning stories, teleplays, and screenplays were regarded as trendsetters.

Born in Chicago in 1917, Bloch developed a childhood affection for imaginative fiction. He became a protégé of author H.P. Lovecraft, whose tutelage resulted in Bloch's selling his first story to *Weird Tales* magazine at age 17.

"His writing was unique," said **Julius Schwartz**, long-time editor at DC Comics and Bloch's agent until the 1940s. "I was editing the Golden Age ***Flash*** and I asked Bob to write a story. It's the one-and-only superhero story he wrote, and it was really weird. But when we did a collection of the greatest Flash stories ever told, I insisted that his story [be] included."

Bloch's stories and scripts were seen on TV shows like *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Thriller with Boris Karloff*, and the original *Star Trek* (the episodes "What are Little Girls Made Of," "Catspaw," and "Wolf in the Fold").

A number of Bloch's stories are being adapted to comics by veteran artist Marie Severin for Aardwolf Publications's *Aardwolf Comics*. The limited edition of *Aardwolf #2* will contain a special tribute to Robert Bloch by **Dave Cockrum** and **Gray Morrow**.

—Clifford Lawrence

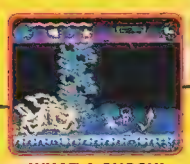
CAPULLO Apology

In regards to his absence at the Great Eastern Con in Philadelphia on October 22-23, artist Greg Capullo issued this statement:

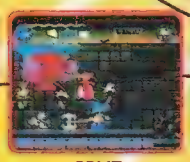
"To all the fans who attended the Philly show and found I was not present to sign their books, I would like to apologize. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I wasn't able to attend, but I vow to make it up twice-fold at the next possible opportunity."

Capullo's next convention appearance has not been determined.

Kitty Litter!



WHAT A SHOCK!



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Foolproof AUTOGRAPHS

Steve Stern, creator of ***Zen Intergalactic Ninja***, spent the weekend of September 28 signing copies of his comics at the TeleCard World '94 show in New York City. Not much news there, right? Comic book folks are doing autograph sessions all the time.

But how many put their John Hancocks down with a **DNA pen**?

The special pen, developed by a company called Art Guard, is designed to make it easy to confirm that an autograph is authentic and not a forgery. According to Stern, the pen maker extracts the signer's DNA pattern from saliva or a hair root, replicates it, then infuses it into the pen ink. "If there were ever a time when the autograph was challenged, Art Guard can put the signature under their scanner to prove the match with my DNA," Stern said.

Stern said he was approached by the pen's inventor, Charles Butland of Art Guard, after Butland read about Zen and Stern's promotional efforts for the character. He said Butland realized that Stern was the type of creator who would understand the marketing and promotional benefits of having a virtually unforgeable autograph.

"I am, to date, the only comic book creator utilizing the DNA pen," Stern noted. "I suspect that is going to change, because I think somebody else will read about it and want the same protections I saw in it."

Among others using the DNA pen is **Joe Barbera**, half of the celebrated animation team of Hanna-Barbera. ☆

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

UP AND COMING: *Jim Calafiore*

Some people walk into comic book stardom through the front door. Others hit it through the back door. Jim Calafiore, however, couldn't find the door. Any door.

"I came at getting into comic books from a real odd angle," reflects the artist. "I was real inept. I never hung out with comic book people. I never went to conventions. I didn't have a clue to the workings of the comic books machine."

Calafiore, a veteran of Valiant's *Armorines*, DC's *Aquaman*, and Marvel's *Force Works*, comes to comics from a slightly quirky place. A defender of such oddball creations as Metal Men, Obsidian, and Juggernaut, Calafiore admits to "taking this superhero stuff very seriously," enjoys "doing specific, rather than generic, fish and underwater stuff," and having a pencil style derived from a number of different places.

"I think my style comes from a lot of influences that don't seem to match up," he speculates. "I think I'm moving toward a more contrast style; solid blacks and whites, no hatching and sharper edges."

Calafiore, born, raised, and currently living in various points of New Jersey, was big on such titles as *The Incredible Hulk*, *Uncanny X-Men*, and, again off the beaten track, *Heavy Metal* Magazine. "I've always been big on power fantasies. I was reading *Heavy Metal* at an early age, and it was funny because, at that age, I barely noticed the nude women," he laughs.

Following graduation from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1985, Calafiore did pasteup and design work for ad agencies, but his creative soul already belonged to the paneled page. So, in short order, he was winging missives in the direction of DC and Marvel. "Yeah, I went through the mail, which I discovered is one of the worst ways to go about it. Unless you have a name or you're Moebius dropping fully formed into the slush pile of the majors, you tend to be ignored."

He found favor with Caliber Press, where he wrote and drew the graphic horror book *Progeny*, the three-issue science fiction adventure *God's Hammer*, the seven-issue run of *Camelot Eternal*, and the first issue of a projected three-issue book called *Mr. Trianglehead*.

Valiant came calling at that point, and Calafiore kicked off the new association by doing *X-O Manowar* #17-#19. He maneuvered his talents into *Magnus: Robot Fighter* #26, and continued to work on that title through #41. He next worked on *Deathmate Blue*, *Rai* #17-#19, and *Armorines* #0-#7 and also #9. He then stepped up to the DC and Marvel plates with *Aquaman* (vol. 3) #5, Marvel's *Force Works* #9-#12, and has War Machine and Grifter pin-ups in the pipeline.

Calafiore sees more *Aquaman* in his future, which is just fine with him. "I'm one of the few people who comes from the independents who take superheroes seriously. I like superheroes if they're done well, and I'm happy to be paid for doing them."

Serious is Calafiore's watchword when it comes to doing the deed. But he does manage to see a spark of humor in it all.

"It's wild to think that I'm sitting home, getting paid to do this. I'm just happy to be sitting home doing something I enjoy."

—Marc Shapiro

Califiore (left) and his rendition of X-O for the cover of *Armorines* #6.

X-O ™ & © Voyager Communications. Photo by Sue A. Goldman.

THE COLD WAR WAS JUST A WARM UP

FURY OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

SPY IT EVERY MONTH BY HOWARD CHAYKIN, CORKY LEHMKUHL, AND MARK MCKENNA.

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Art Imitates

Artist Alex Ross on the success of Marvel's *Marvels*, the end of the DC Universe

Life

By Craig Shutt

and why Peter Parker is such a weasel.

The hardest part about being Spider-Man, Alex Ross tells you, is that the mask's eye lenses fog up. Picking up a homemade mask that looks like it was ripped from Peter Parker's head as he swung by, Ross explains how the material blocks Spidey's breath and blows it back into his face, fogging the one-way reflective lenses.

This sort of thing doesn't bother the superheroes drawn by most artists, but it poses a dilemma for the ones painted by Ross. Because Alex Ross's superheroes breathe.

With only a handful of assignments under his belt, Ross exploded into readers' awareness late in 1993 with *Marvels*, the four-part Marvel Comics series created with writer Kurt Busiek. A critical and popular smash, the story combined a distinctive narrative perspective with some of the most realistically painted superheroes ever to appear in a comic book.

The series caused a sensation in the industry, garnering several major awards and leading to the announcement of a number of offspring. There's the *Marvels II: Seduction of the Innocent* mini-series (which picks up where the first series left off, although from a rookie cop's perspective), a *Marvel: Portraits of a Universe* four-part mini-series (a gallery of fully painted art and full-panel pages depicting classic scenes from the Marvel Universe, selected by each artist), and *Tales of the Marvels* (a series of limited series which takes an average person's perspective of the Marvel Universe, a la *Marvels*), although none of them currently involve Ross or Busiek.

"It's bizarre to me that *Marvels* was the first big thing to really show superheroes painted in a way that readers could identify with them," the artist says with a shrug. "It seemed like such an obvious move for a painter to make; I was surprised no one had pursued it. I was thinking, 'It would be so easy to do a painted book of the Justice League—it'd be huge!' It'd have to be! When you show superheroes in a realistic way, you feel like they're flesh and blood. You identify with them."

His catalyst for *Marvels* came from DC's three-part painted *Black Orchid* mini-series by writer Neil Gaiman and artist Dave McKean from 1988. "I felt like they beat me to it, because that had Batman, Swamp Thing, and Poison Ivy," he says. "That was getting closer to what I had in mind [than previous painted comics had]. It was a painted representation of superheroes that wasn't embarrassed to be telling a story about them."

Earlier painters who brought new artistic styles into comics "didn't really seem to like superheroes that much," he says. "I thought that distaste for the material showed through

All characters depicted on pages 26-27 ™ & © DC Comics

DC's superstars never looked so good.

Ross hard at work in his Illinois home.

PHOTO: CRAIG A. SHUTT

in the work and was [the reason] why the comics only worked up to a certain point." Ross has no desire to depict grim, moody heroes, he asserts. "I want to show them out in the brilliant sunshine, where you can really see them."

More surprising than this 24-year-old's artistic talent and attention to detail, is the deep respect he holds for the superheroes' heritage. That was made clear by the Human Torch origin story he used to pitch the *Marvels* idea, which first appeared in *Marvel Age* #130 before being collected into *Marvels* #0 and the later hardcover collection.

"I think people need to be reminded sometimes that the Marvel Universe is supposed to be exactly like ours up to the point when the first superheroes began to appear," he explains. "I wanted to deal with the history of that change, and the Human Torch was the beginning of the Marvel Universe in my mind. So he seemed like the natural place to start."

Marvel's superhero genesis holds a strong fascination for Ross, he admits. "The Torch is a very odd character to begin your universe with, don't you think? Especially compared to [DC Comics's] Superman. They were aiming him to be a superhero, but our take in *Marvels* distilled him down to his key element, which was that he's really a creature set loose on humanity."

Despite this somewhat monstrous image, however, the character appeals greatly to Ross on a basic level. "I love purity," he says.

"And the Human Torch is a completely pure concept. Nothing preceded him. He's also pure in being a very simple visual concept. It hits you quickly: he's a man who is not just on fire, but is fire. The Human Torch looks pretty damn scary in person. You wouldn't stand next to him and go, 'Phtt! Nice outfit!' You'd want to get the hell away! He's frightening."

Ross cherishes many of those original 1940s concepts. "Dr. Mid-Nite was the first blind hero; the Shield was the first patriotic hero," he ticks off. "None of those characters are based on others. The editorial hatred at DC toward [the Justice Society of America] is a really disheartening thing to see. Some people [within DC] really wanted those characters—and what they represented—dead. That's a little worrisome. I'm hoping it's a cycle, and someday people will be ready for the purity of the JSA again."

The argument that such characters are too old to be superheroes leaves Ross unmoved. "Superhero companies don't believe readers want to read about a superhero who isn't of their own generation, yet they're dealing with an audience going from five to 35 years old or older," he counters. "In every facet of America, especially in comics, we seem to be obsessed with youth. Characters can't age beyond a certain point."

Part of that derives from artists not wanting to deal with anything or any age group they are unfamiliar with, he says. "I don't want to limit myself that way. I want to find the specialness in the older generation of characters."

That love for older heroes will be made clear when *Kingdom Come*, his next project, begins appearing sometime in early 1996 from DC Comics. Written by Mark Waid from a concept by Ross, the four-part, fully painted series will examine the entire DC Universe 20 years in the future. It will give at least a glimpse of how "every conceivable major character" has changed by then, and focus on a pivotal event that brings them together. (For more on this project, see the sidebar.)

"The great thing is that as an Elseworlds story, it lets me play with thoughts I'm having about what would happen as the characters got older and how they'd relate to their grown-up children," he explains. "One thing I'm looking forward to doing is drawing the lines on these guys' faces."

Ross finds the replacement of heroes due to age an intriguing concept: "I realize it interferes with the modern interpretation of the Greek myths—there's only one Zeus, right? But maybe we could be reading [about] our third Batman and not have lost a single reader if they had replaced him realistically over time." The current surge of young heroes shows that companies are realizing the need for new heroes, he adds, but it's a process that should have come gradually through the years, instead of all at once.

Such historical reflections from a man just a few years out of art school results from several early influences, notably his siblings and a key book. Ross was born in Portland, Ore., but moved with his family to Texas when he was six. "I never forgot I was a northern boy," he laughs. "It's a whole different culture down there."

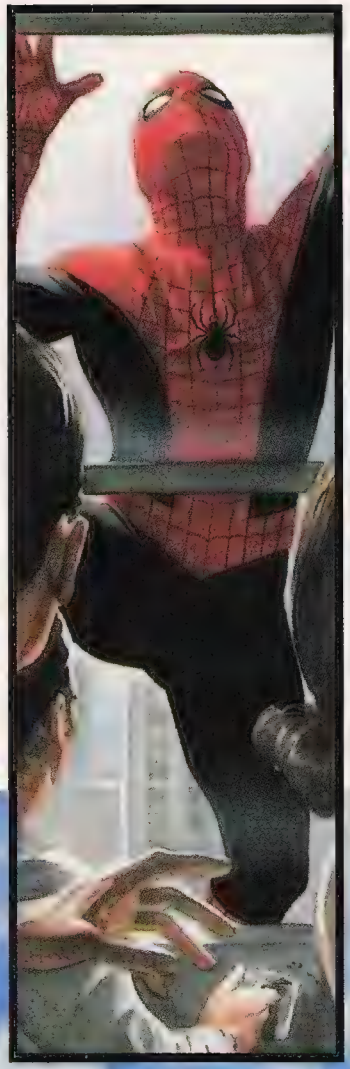
His father, a Protestant minister, and his mother, a fashion illustrator, have been married more than 40 years. They grew up in Chicago and now live there, a few miles from Ross.

"I showed an interest in art pretty early on. And when I say I showed an interest," he laughs, "I mean it's all I did. Since I was about three years old, I was always drawing."

Mostly, he drew Spider-Man. Ross's introduction to the character came via PBS-TV's *Electric Company* educational program. Noting that interest, his parents bought him some copies of Marvel's *Spidey Super Stories* comics, based on the program. His horizons expanded somewhat when he snuck a peek at the comics being read by his two sisters and brother, all 10 to 15 years older than him. While he was reading *Spidey Super Stories*, they were buying books like the renowned racy underground comic, *Zap*, he says. "So at age four, I was seeing the work of [Victor] Moscoso and all those others. It was a pretty good range of things to see."

Another key influence came from the book *Comix: The History of Comic Books in America* by Les Daniels. Published in 1971, the book opened Ross's mind to what had gone before. "It covered everything from the birth of comics through the undergrounds, with everything in between," Ross says.

If superheroes walked the Earth...Is *Marvels* the most "realistic" comic book ever? Judge for yourself.



Giant-Man, Phil Sheldon, Spider-Man ™ & © Marvel Comics Entertainment Group. All rights reserved.

THY KINGDOM COME

***Kingdom Come*, now being penciled and painted by Ross from a script by Mark Waid, focuses on a possible DC future 20 or so years hence. "It's never going to happen," Ross admits, "but DC's future could look like this. You'll get my commentary on how all the main characters might have gone." It also will include at least a glimpse of "every conceivable major DC character from the past 30 years."**

The story focuses on how the heroes have matured and changed through the years. Superman, for instance, has retreated to seclusion because he feels crowded out of the superhero picture. The Flash has turned Keystone City into a well-patrolled paradise, Green Lantern has set up a floating Emerald City to protect Earth from invading aliens, and other heroes have turned their attention to impacting their own personal worlds.

That changes when a stunning event forces every hero on Earth to choose sides and go to war, Ross reveals. As with *Marvels*, the story will be told from the viewpoint of an outsider, who sees the armies of characters coming together in a war to end all wars. Each character will make his or her decision based on his or her own personality, although many of those details will be left to the reader's imagination.

"There's going to be a lot more upfront action in this than there was in *Marvels*," Ross promises. "But it will have the same thoughtfulness and respectful concept to it. I want to present some of these great legends at the age they really should be and deal with some of their kids." Those children include Speedy's daughter, Donna Troy's son (who won't be Lord Chaos), and Nightwing, who resumes the Robin mantle as an adult.

Other characters will be shown as having aged, including Batman, Green Arrow, and Superman—but not Wonder Woman, who, after all, was created from clay, Ross points out. Captain Marvel will be featured prominently, "and I'll treat him with the respect I think he deserves," he promises.

"I'm in the most glorious position for a fanboy ever to be in," he gloats. "I can redesign every character I want to, age them 20 years, or leave them the way they are and say that someone else is wearing the costume."

Ross created a 40-page outline, which Waid is following to craft the final story. "From our initial meeting, I could see I was going to be in good hands," Ross says. "I'm still doing everything I wanted to do, and anything that's been changed is better. I'm very happy with it."

Although similarities to *Marvels* exist, including the four-part, 48-page prestige format, Ross sees the story from a different angle. "They're like bookends," he explains. "*Marvels* is sort of like a first-hand look at the beginning of a superhero universe. *Kingdom Come* provides a first-hand look at the end of one."

—Craig Shutt

Ross didn't plan to graduate art school and become a comic artist. "I thought I'd end up doing some kind of storytelling, be it children's books or what have you," he says. "I kept my mind open to dozens of possibilities, but it was obvious from my sketching at home that I was still focused on comic book-type storytelling."

After graduating from The American Academy of Art in Chicago, Ross spent three years at the Leo Burnett advertising agency in Chicago doing storyboards for commercials. "It was a good job," he says. "The Burnett standard is to have storyboards as photo-realistic as possible. So, I was putting my skills from art school directly into play with no scaling down. It kept me refreshed constantly."

It also taught him a critical skill, he adds. "Advertising art pushed me to illustrate things I wouldn't want to draw otherwise," he explains. "That's the best thing possible to be able to do when you're telling a story. You've got to be able to draw the boring domestic and business situations. It would do any artist good to have that training. You have to push yourself to where you can pretty much draw anything."

His favored medium is watercolor and gouache. "I was trained in oil painting, but it takes too long," he says. "Acrylics will become more popular because they bring something new to comics, but they also are time-consuming."

He turned out 12 pages of *Marvels* artwork a month, he notes. "The only reason *Marvels* came out as quickly as it did was because I had no semblance of an outside life," he laughs. *Kingdom Come* is being produced at a rate of about 10 pages a month, he adds. "I don't want a sense of rushing or of letting it fall short."

Known for his realism and ability to replicate likenesses, Ross most enjoys working from living models and photos. His sun-drenched studio includes such helpful

Ross's depictions of the cover to *Fantastic Four* #1 (opp. left), DC's Golden Age Sandman (above), and Galactus's waxing of the Silver Surfer (right).

items as Galactus's helmet, models of a Sentinel and the Silver Surfer, Spider-Man's mask, and a healthy collection of action figures. Books and photo packets are stacked everywhere. "Drawing on my imagination is way too limited of a source to provide the range of people I try to include," he explains. "And when I know the person I'm drawing, it's inspiring. That's fun."

Ross's entry into comics in 1989 came via another Burnett employee who was doing some work for the Chicago-based Now Comics. The introduction led Ross to paint a five-issue mini-series called *Terminator: The Burning Earth* that has been collected into a trade paperback. "I asked if I could paint it, and they didn't really care," he says. But he was thrilled. "I was thinking, 'Wow, this is my first comics art, and it will be painted.'"

That project, completed while still working at Burnett, got him an assignment for Marvel's short-lived *Open Space* anthology series, edited by Kurt Busiek. Although the book was canceled before Ross's pages were published, the connection with Busiek paid dividends. "I was planning to use him as my editorial connection to pitch my *Marvels* proposal," Ross says. But by the time Ross was ready with his sample 12-page Human Torch story, Busiek had become a freelance writer.

In the interim, Busiek helped Ross nab an assignment for the third issue of Eclipse's *Miracleman: Apocrypha* anthology, published in February 1992. "I was glad to get that, because Miracleman was one of my favorite characters," Ross says. That work led in a roundabout Eclipse-Clive Barker-Marvel way to his doing *Hellraiser* #17 for Epic, by which time Ross was working on his comics painting full-time.

During this period, Ross continued working on the proposal that would become *Marvels*. Originally, he planned

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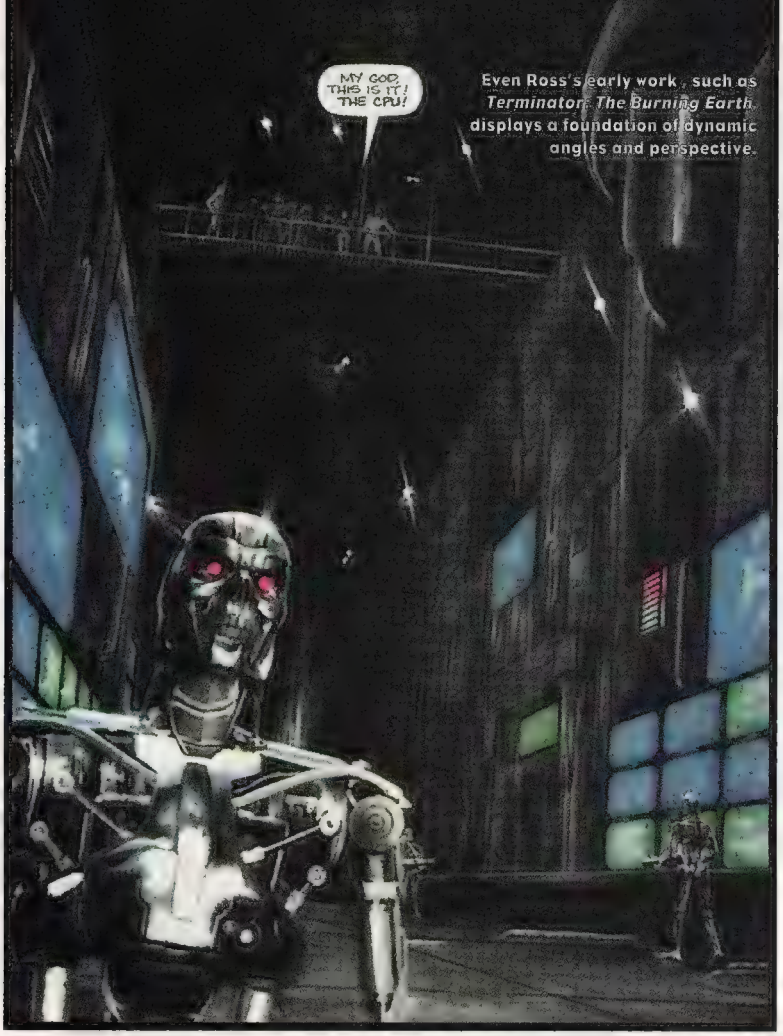

Even Ross's early work, such as *Terminator: The Burning Earth*, displays a foundation of dynamic angles and perspective.

The Terminator ™ & © Carolco Pictures Inc.

a series of unconnected stories about various Marvel superheroes done in his realistic painting style. "I asked Kurt if he wanted to write it for me, and he said, well, no," Ross laughs. "He said it wouldn't sell because there was no concept, just an anthology of unrelated themes." He grins broadly. "Well, he was wrong," he laughs again. "It would have sold. But as one overall story, it was a much finer thing."

Ross credits Busiek with creating the exterior point of view that keeps the heroes at arm's length. "I wanted to do as many superhero images as possible," he admits. "But Kurt wanted the story to focus on normal people. He's the genius who made that work. He made me realize that for the narrative to be effective, you needed to see the real people more. I think the most precious thing that came out of *Marvels* is that different perspective. That's our true contribution."

The feeling of wonder permeating *Marvels* provided a key ingredient, he adds. "No one appreciates the nobility of heroes any more. They're interested in which characters have the biggest guns, the biggest knives, the biggest claws. What kids today are being turned onto is not what past comics generations for the previous 50 years have looked on as being the noble aspirations of superheroes. It's something very new, something cold. Kids are growing up much more cynical than we ever did."

The narrator's changing emotions as *Marvels* progresses is "a metaphor for the fan's disillusionment with Marvel Comics," he says, quoting his collaborator. "If you grew up in the '60s, by the mid-'70s you had to be losing your enthusiasm for the whole thing, especially if you had a feeling for Marvel's history since 1939."

The Marvel Universe, like the mini-series, came to a stop with Gwen Stacy's death, he argues. "Today, [Marvel] seems to focus on giving the illusion of change and growth without actually changing anything," he says. "But from 1961 to 1973, there was a lot of change. There was so much growth in the characters in that period, and I only realized that when I read some of the reprints."

Considering his desire to paint superheroes, it's probably no surprise that his favorite issue was #3, featuring the all-out battle between the Fantastic Four and Galactus. Ironically, Busiek was the one to suggest making it the pivotal battle, Ross says. "I knew as soon as I heard it that it was perfect."

The problem then became painting it. "I wasn't sure I could recreate those Kirby images," he admits. "It wasn't so much that they were really good—Kirby's done a lot better—but he just bowls me over. I was consumed with how incredible this guy was, and how impossible it was to follow him."

Reading the issues (*FF* #48-#50) that the story is based on, together with *Marvels* #3, produces a fascinating experience. "I think that if kids go back and look at the originals, they might say, 'Oh, your version is so much better because it's more realistic,'" he says. "I think you need a broad appreciation of Kirby's work to see why he's so great and why my putting a sheen on it doesn't make it better. It's the line. There's so much energy there I can't capture, because I'm doing it more realistically."

Considering his life-long love for Spider-Man, it's somewhat surprising how the character is held at arm's length in issue #4. But that, too, was by design. "I represented Spider-Man in *Marvels* the way I was introduced to him in *The Electric Company*," he explains. "He never spoke, and you didn't know he was Peter Parker. So in *Marvels*, we never get in-depth contact with him, and he has no dialogue."

The creators intentionally depicted Spider-Man's alter ego as something of a weasel, he admits. "Peter Parker was such a disappointment to me as a kid," he says. "The first time I saw him, I thought there was no way that this square could be Spider-Man! I thought Spider-Man would be cool out of his costume. It took me a while to get adjusted to that."

So deep was his disgust, in fact, that he asked Busiek to keep Parker out of *Marvels* altogether. "Kurt worked out the best cameo. It was so fitting," he says. "My personal distaste for the character came through in Phil [the narrator]."

Ross's work since *Marvels* has focused on a series of posters and magazine covers, including this issue's *Wizard* cover and recreations of the covers to *Fantastic Four* #1, *X-Men* #1, and *Amazing Fantasy* #15 that will be released soon. His only other comics work appeared in DC's *Sandman Mystery Theatre Annual* #1, as a chapter of that book's story done in gray tones. This is, in fact, the story he's proudest of to date, he says.

That may change with the release of *Kingdom Come*, but that's a popularity time-bomb ticking away for the future. "There will be a period before *Kingdom Come* appears where nobody will see me for a little bit, but that's OK," he says. "After as much as I've been seen this year, you could probably do with a break from me. If I were a fan, I'd be a little sick of me." ☆

Craig Shutt, a Chicago-based freelance writer, can't wait for Kingdom Come, *so he can see Roy Harper junk his Arsenal identity and become the Red Arrow, complete with red goatee.*

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The Psychic Hotline!

We found a direct line to the future of the comic world, and are now prepared to uncover our fantastic findings.

By Jim McLauchlin and Andrew Kardon

This is America, hot dammit, where everyone—including us—wants to get ahead. The "us" in this case being Jim McLauchlin and Andrew Kardon, the bestest buddies in the whole darn world. (Actually, Jim's a Vikings fan, and Andrew's a Steelers fan...but that's a whole other story.) In the comic world, getting ahead means finding out what's going to happen before the other guy. Fortunately for us go-getters, there are groovy publications like *Advance Comics*, *Previews*, and yes, even *Wizard*, that tell us what's coming in the comic realm months in advance. But to know the real juice—stuff that won't be happening for quite some time—that's when we need to appeal to a higher power.

"Higher power" in this case means our friends at the La Toya Jackson Authentic Psychic Network phone line, a presentation of The Zodiac Group of Boca Raton, Fla. To find out what's happening down the road, however, always comes at a price. The price in this case is $3.99 a minute, conveniently billed to Wizard Press. Yeah, like there's any room left on our personal Visa cards.

We were aided in our quest by Dallas, one of the psychics in La Toya's Network. He was using Tarot cards in the Celtic cross-layout, "in addition to my own psychic impressions," he said, to divine his answers.

Lois and Clark

Things are looking good with Dallas. It seems like this guy knows his stuff, and he can use terms like "Celtic cross-layout." So we posed him the first question. Would the lengthy Clark Kent-Lois Lane engagement ever end with their marriage?

"My cards show a high probability that it will not," Dallas said. Our hearts sank. We were so looking forward to the

event! What, we demanded to know, could possibly tear these lovebirds apart? One of Supes's old flames? Lana Lang? It's gotta be Lori Lemaris. That broad's just a bit too fishy for our tastes.

"It will most likely be a male," Dallas said, "maybe even someone related to Clark Kent. I doubt that it will be one of Clark's old girlfriends, but there will definitely be a negative force that breaks these two apart."

Attack of the Spider-Baby

A bit depressed, we turned our attention to happier concerns. Rumor has it that a newborn bundle of joy will soon be heading the way of our favorite Spider-couple, Peter and Mary Jane Parker. So, we asked Dallas what we could expect.

"No. She is not pregnant," Dallas told us. Again, we were anguished. After all, we were looking forward to a slice of Aunt May's yummy banana cream pie at the baby shower. How is this possible? What about the clues, the hints, the subtleties-as-subtle-as-a-brick-to-the-head they've been dropping in the Spider-titles? "I think we're dealing with a pseudo-pregnancy here," Dallas said. Maybe Mary Jane's just "almost pregnant."

As to the whole Spider-Clone morass, Dallas assured us that "The man who we all have believed to be Spider-Man for the past 20 years is the real Spider-Man." Apparently, this guy running around calling himself the Scarlet Spider is, in fact, the clone. Whew! Thank goodness the cards never lie.

Back for the Attack!

We had to know about Reed Richards, the venerable leader of the Fantastic Four. It appeared as though he died with his arch-nemesis Doctor Doom in a flash of light, but rumors abounded that perhaps Reed was still alive. Dallas confirmed this. "My cards show over a 90 percent probability that he will be coming back." You mean they'll actually bring a comic book character back from the dead?

"Actually," Dallas interjected, "the cards show that this is all somehow related to a dream. Maybe we all just dreamed he was dead, but he never actually died." Kind of like that whole season of the TV show *Dallas* that turned out to be a dream, right? "Maybe," Dallas (the psychic) chuckled. "What I feel will actually happen is that someone might actually dream him back into reality, dream him back into life, so to speak."

Hmmm. Might Reed's son, Franklin Richards, somehow be involved here? He's got, like, superduper mental powers and might somehow be able to bring daddykins back from beyond the grave. Could be a reason to read *Fantastic Force*, huh? Nah, we didn't think so, either.

Covering All the Bases

We wanted to know not only what was going to happen in comics, but in *Wizard*, too. So, we asked Dallas if we'd break with tradition in 1995 and actually do a cover that didn't feature a Marvel mutant or an Image character. He wasn't quite sure. "I do sense change for your magazine, and it is an outward change, but I'm not sure if that involves changing your covers," he said. "I guess new covers would be an outward change, though."

Change, huh? Well, what sort of change? Will we be fired? Worse yet, might we be forced to work here forever? Even worst of all, might Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum stop changing his socks? Dallas wasn't sure, so we asked to talk to an even higher power—La Toya Jackson herself. "She's not here," he said. "As near as I can tell, she just owns the line. She just puts her name and face on it and rakes in the millions."

Since we couldn't talk with La Toya, we figured we owed it to all you spiffy fans out there to try yet another psychic hotline. So, this time we called up Joyce Jillson's Astrology line and spoke with the informative, and quite personable, Deanna.

Humility for Hal

We jumped right in and asked Deanna what the deal with Hal Jordan was. Here's

one of the noblest guys we know, who in one quick (though painful) mini-series, *Zero Hour*, managed to destroy DC's entire timeline. Seeing as how Hal was the greatest Green Lantern of all time, we inquired as to whether he'll ever become Earth's mighty protector again.

"Yeah," she replied. And it'll be caused by "an innocent relationship that somehow takes him back. I would assume it's a woman, or a female child, perhaps."

But what about the rest of the DC Universe characters? Will they still hold a grudge against him? The guy did try to kill every one of them, after all. "Other characters will be suspicious of her [the one who brings Hal back]. I think he'll be a little harsh with himself, too. We're gonna see some major humility here." Maybe Jordan'll get one o' those banana cream pies right in the kisser.

The Fugitive

We know Hal's off somewhere in the stars (looking for an innocent female, no doubt), but more importantly, where the hell is Alfred? He left his post as head butler of Wayne Manor and hasn't been seen since. "Well, he feels like he has some unfinished business," Deanna told us. "He's in a state of fear, because the law is after him, so to speak. They think he did something wrong, and it was really a setup by one of Bruce Wayne's foes." Maybe the cops think he stole the family silverware. Anyway, fear not, butler fans, Deanna assured us that the Alfredmeister will be returning soon. "He's gonna come back slowly. Maybe one of the stronger women in Batman's past is going to help. It might be that reporter woman, Vicki Vale, because she's got power, being a writer and a journalist."

Dream On

For our final prediction, we asked if the Sandman, from that funky and constantly brain-hurting Vertigo line, was really going to die. And more importantly—who would take his place? "The Hermit!" exclaimed Deanna. "We have a number of things going on with the Sandman here," she continued. "Part of it is, he finds himself in a situation where he thought he was powerful and he discovers he's not. And so he tries to hide that. He goes off into hiding for a while, and they think he's dead, but he's really just embarrassed. He's emasculated." Yeowch!! We hesitate to even *spell* that word.

So, anyway, who's this Hermit guy? "The Hermit," according to our psychic friend, is "someone who knows what's going on. Maybe he's somebody with psychic ability—sort of like a dark magician kind of figure."

As for our loyal Dream King, Deanna reassured us that he'll be returning in the spring.

So, there you have it. The future of comics. It's too bad we didn't get to talk to that Nostradamus guy. He'd probably predict the demise of the entire comic book industry in 1997. Oh, well, guess we'll have to wait that one out ourselves.

Anyway, kids, it's been fun, and hopefully you've learned a thing or three. Like the fact that all psychics' names begin with the letter D. And that it's really easy to waste $3.99 a minute, as long as you can get some sucker (e.g., Wizard Press) to pick up the bill. ☆

For some reason, Jim McLauchlin, who spends most of his time over at Collector's Sportslook, *has never been able to do the Electric Slide. For obvious reasons, Andrew Kardon, who spends all of his time right here, is praying that he never has to witness Jim attempt such a maneuver.*

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To tell you the truth, we've never put much stock in psychic predictions. So, before we tried La Toya and Joyce Jillson's lines, we went to a different breed of experts: consumer hotlines. These are staffed with average people who spend about eight hours every day just waiting for someone like us to call and ask them questions. Heck, if it wasn't for us, they'd all be out of a job. So, we felt it was our responsibility—nay, our *civic duty*—to call these people up and ask them what 1995 holds for the comic book industry. Unfortunately, we met with little success.

Gina, over at Oscar Mayer, was unable to tell us if Marvel would ever put out a decent movie. "I don't read comics. Oh, gee, I don't know." She was, however, able to tell us what the hell olive loaf is made of. "Well, it's basically chicken, pork, and olives," she said. We told her that's pretty strange, to which she responded, "It's not bad, it's just different tasting." So is gravel, but you don't see us chompin' on a sidewalk!

OK. What about Nestlé? They've got those awesome Crunch™ bars and stuff. And according to Judy, those new Buncha Crunch™ candies are actually made in a cool machine with a wild spin action. And here we thought they just smashed leftover Crunch™ bars to bits with a mallet. As for the next big comic trend, her only response was, "We don't have any comics here." Sigh.

Kathy, over at Nabisco, enjoyed our suggestion for peanut butter Mallomars™. We don't blame her. How could anyone resist such a mouth-sticking opportunity? She let us down, though, when we inquired as to why we get sleepy everytime we read a Valiant comic. "That I couldn't comment on," was all she said.

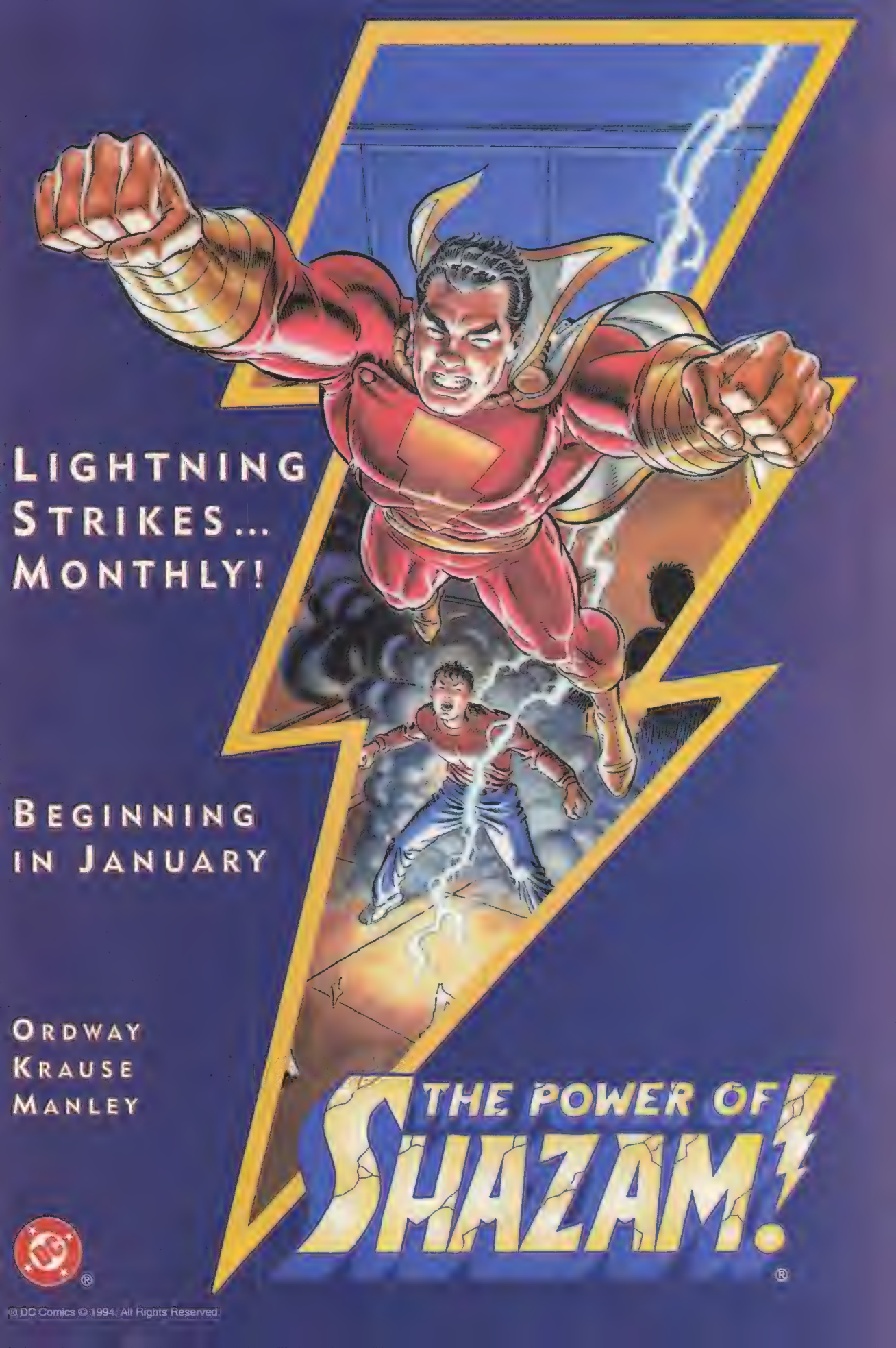
Our last resort was Purina. They deal with pet food, so they've gotta know all kinds of neato stuff, right? Well, when we told Eileen that Andrew's dog Muffin had been chomping down on a *Ninjak* #1, chromium cover and all, her only suggestion was, "I would check with my vet on that one." No concern whatsoever for the wounded condition of that comic, and none for Muffin, either.

While we made some new friends at Oscar Mayer, we got nowhere with our comic book inquiries. So with this route of information gathering kaput, we had no choice but to turn to the pricey pros on them psychic hotline thingies.

Well, if nothing else, now we know what's in Olive Loaf.

- Jim McLauchlin and Andrew Kardon

ANDREW SPOTS THE ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONS.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'BOUT TIME KID. LET'S GO.

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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and whoever it was that decided that the scene from the novel *Jurassic Park*, where the T-Rex chases the raft down river, shouldn't be in the movie. That was like the scariest scene on the planet! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a three-by-five-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry along with your funky-fresh photos to 1,001 Comics, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prize will be awarded in the name of the contest winner and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Entries deemed by the contest judges to be illegal or dangerous will be automatically disqualified. Oh, and the scene where Nedry (the fat guy) gets eaten? In the book it's like, 1,00,000 times worse. Eeeyuch! All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 28, 1995. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Wizard Press will choose a winner based on the creativity, originality, and effectiveness of the promotion. All decisions are final. No ands, ifs, or buts. And especially, no whining! The winner will be chosen on May 1, 1995, by Wizard Press.

For the name of the winner, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to 1,001 Comics Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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Steady as Shi

Shi creator William Tucci tells his story of success, how it wasn't easy, and why creators should do things their own way.

by Buddy Scalera

William Tucci is something of an American success story. Like scores of thriving entrepreneurs, he wagered risk against gain...and won. Big time.

Armed with little more than a sketch pad and some good old-fashioned initiative, Tucci ventured into the risky and product-rich arena of comic book self-publishing with *Shi*.

Shi is a classic tale of revenge between power-hungry enemies who struggle for control of Japan. The comic focuses on Ana Ishikawa, a reluctant soldier living in present-day America, bent on avenging the murders of both her father and brother. Ana is a woman torn between her duties as a warrior and her responsibilities as a Christian. In Tucci's words, the story is "a journey of self-discovery for Shi, and also for a lot of other people in the book. [It deals with] the differences—and the conflicts—between the old world and the new."

Shi (Japanese for "death") owes its genuine freshness and originality to penciler/co-writer Tucci and co-writer Peter Gutierrez. Inks by Harvey Mercadoocasio and Michael Bair, backgrounds by Nelson Asencio, and colors by Barry Orkin provide further depth and richness to the comic.

Not only did *Shi* have the right formula for survival, but Tucci now sits high atop a venerable goldmine. The low print runs of *Shi* #1 created an unexpected purchasing frenzy this summer among collectors. The first two issues are holding steady on various magazines' "hot picks" lists, a sure sign of success for any comic publisher.

These days, Tucci tells of his role reversal from fanboy at 1993's San Diego Comic Convention to fan favorite at 1994's San Diego con. "It was funny that I was at San Diego [in 1993] looking for a job, and then this past year, it was incredible," he says with characteristic vigor, in his classic Long Island, N.Y. accent. "There were people waiting on line to see *me*!"

This is a total switch from waiting on line to please portfolio critics, who weren't too helpful. "I guess my style wasn't right," he says. "My mistake was that they would tell me how to draw. An assistant editor at DC Comics would tell me, 'You should draw more like this,' and show me a DC book.

"So I would take the DC book and try to draw like that. But then I was just a clone with another hundred guys waiting on line. So I said the hell with it, and I started to go back to my old way, which is sort of 'fashiony' because of my fashion background. I was a fashion illustrator, too."

Tucci graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in illustration in 1990. It was during college when he first discovered comics. "I never really read comics growing up," he says. Tucci, whose artistic roots lie in film, music, and Japanese wood block prints, stresses that his formal art training was not specific to comics. "I think it's better to learn [in school] than to copy from other comic book artists."

After college, Tucci served in the National Guard as an Army paratrooper (Yes, he jumped out of airplanes!), with the rank of specialist, and was honorably discharged. Back at home on Long Island, Tucci was like a struggling actor, working to survive. "If there was a job on this Earth, I've done it. From being a bricklayer to installing sprinklers to designing baby clothes—which I did at Macy's—to being a security guard at a dairy," he says.

Fortunately, Tucci's inability to secure a staff position with any large publishers didn't discourage him; it strengthened his resolve to create his own company, Crusade Comics.

With his own company, Tucci had full creative control of *Shi*, but was also saddled with the responsibility of raising the money for its printing, advertising, and distribution. "I'm doing this all on my own. A lot of people don't know I own Crusade. I do the distribution, I do the solicitations, and I take out the garbage. [Some people] think I'm just the artist or something. It's a lot of work, but it's great to be your own boss."

With *Shi* now quite successful, Tucci plans to change its present six-week schedule to a

SHI ™ & © WILLIAM ELLIOTT TUCCI

Goes

monthly one, starting in early 1995, as well as expand his fledgling company. He recently announced that he will be utilizing the skills of celebrated inker Jimmy Palmiotti in future issues of *Shi*.

Tucci and Palmiotti met this year at the *Sandman* display at the Four-Color Images Gallery in New York City and quickly formed a friendship.

"A lot of people mistake *Shi* for a pin-up book, but Bill does his research on the artwork, and that helps make the book a really good read," Palmiotti says. "I'm always behind creator-owned books, and it looked like an opportunity to have some fun."

Tucci was confident he had a good product in *Shi*, but even he did not anticipate the sudden rush of attention he received with his first two issues. He hesitates to attribute this success to the present trend involving certain types of women. "I'm sure *Shi*'s popularity [owes a lot to] the Bad Girl trend, but there wasn't anything *called* the Bad Girl trend when we sold out of #1. It was just [due to] people requesting the book because they felt it was a good book—a good read. We really want to do a lot with this story—we want to keep people's attention; I don't want this book to be part of a fad."

Tucci has big plans for his well-received work, but he is cautious about moving too fast. Tucci and Gutierrez want to firmly establish *Shi* before Crusade branches out with other titles, which they plan on doing later in 1995. Instead, Shi is being negotiated to appear in special inter-publisher crossovers. While Tucci is hesitant to discuss the crossovers, he does say the first crossover, of sorts, is a poster depicting Shi with Tempest and Cyblade, two feisty females from Image co-founder Marc Silvestri's Cyberforce universe, that appears in this issue of *Wizard*.

Tucci stresses that *Shi* was written initially as a film script, so he is pleased with his wide range of opportunities. "I've had three film offers already; a Japanese animation company is interested in it, and people have expressed interest in doing CD-ROM," Tucci says. "I can see it being a film, [but] I want to take things slow. I want to be very careful with it, because this is my life. I don't want to put a third-rate film out that goes directly to video."

As for the future of the comic itself, Tucci states, "There's going to be a lot of action and intrigue, a lot of surprises. We're building up the character base for the whole story, and building up the subplots." Also, issue #5 introduces a new, important female character named Tomoe.

The lead heroine will be doing some soul-searching in the coming months. "Basically, she got involved in a war that started long before she was born, and she really isn't ready to handle something like this," Tucci notes. "She's hunting Arashi right now, but then she will go to the funeral of the men she battled with, and she'll see these grieving widows and children. She's gonna get a whole new outlook on it, and will decide not to become Shi anymore. It's too late, because Arashi is in a revenge mode, and has just hired these Nara warriors to come after her. Now, she's gonna be the hunted, and in reeeeeal deep trouble. She'll have to defend herself, and the Nara warriors will be going after Arashi's enemies as well, [namely] the Italian and Chinese Mafia, and making it look like Shi's doing this." Tucci adds that this storyline, entitled "Way of the Warrior," "is really just the tip of the iceberg of the whole Shi story.

"We're also [beginning] the *Arashi Memoirs*," Tucci notes, "which will be a separate title later in '95, written by myself and Gary Cohn. That will tell the story of Arashi's rise to power, and will be [drawn] by Barry Orkin."

The publisher has definite hopes for *Shi*'s readership: "I'd like to keep the audience growing, and I'd like for people to not look at it as a speculator's book. I'd like a lot more women to read it. I'd also like to teach people things. I think we've got such a great medium here, and there's so much negativity [being put towards comics, in general]—gratuitous sex and violence and stuff like that. I want to do something positive with the medium—take it to its next level, bring something new to it."

Tucci's optimistic, upbeat personality masks his serious desire to market *Shi* successfully. He plans to keep putting his all into the task, for despite all the fanfare he's received, Tucci balks at the suggestion that he is an instant success. "I've been banging at this for a long time," he says. "Thank God, I live in America, where you can do whatever you want. It's the American Dream." ☆

Buddy Scalera is a freelance journalist from New Jersey and claims to have broken all of his ties to the Mafia. He can be seen hosting the television show ComixVision, *which is aired in northern New Jersey.*

SHI, JAPANESE FOR DEATH!

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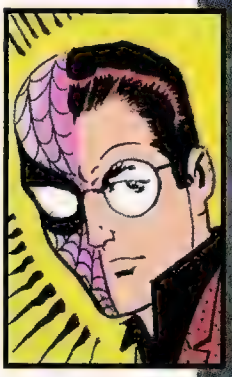
Wizard casts the Spider-Man movie.

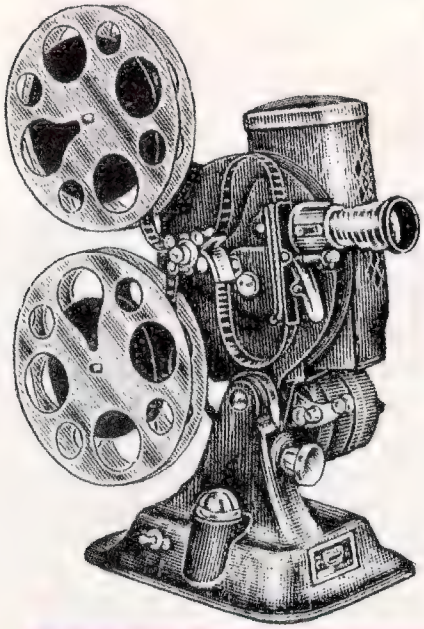
Casting Call 2

Is it us, or have they been promising us a live-action Spider-Man movie for, like, the past decade? And we're not talkin' about anything cheesy, like that god-awful live-action TV show from the '70s. What we mean is something with pizzazz.

Well, screw 'em, 'cause we're not waitin' any longer. What follows is the Spider-Man movie as we see it, cast with the actors we know can pull the job off. First off, the director would be John McTiernan, who directed such awesome action flicks as *Predator, Die Hard,* and *The Hunt for Red October* (and *Last Action Hero,* but we won't hold it against 'im). The special effects would, of course, be by the king of special FX, Industrial Light and Magic. As far as who'd get their names up in lights for this extravaganza, well, here's who we were thinkin' about...



PHOTOS: BRIAN HAMILL FOR MIRAMAX FILMS



PETER PARKER

To pull off the role of Joe-average, Peter Parker, we turn to John Cusack, best known for his roles in *Better Off Dead, Say Anything,* and *The Grifters.* We figure he's better than actor Charlie Sheen, who's too much of a heartthrob to play the nerdy Parker. (No offense, John.)

BY A BUNCH OF *WIZARD* STAFFERS

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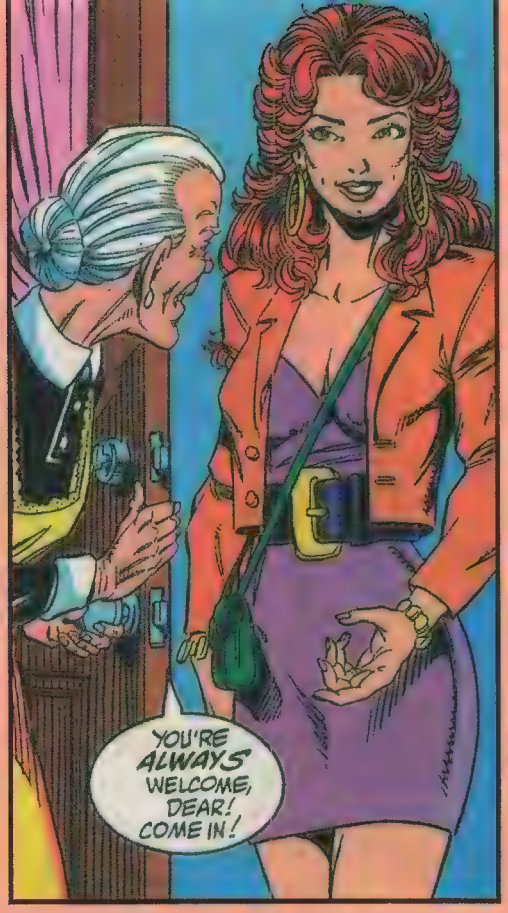


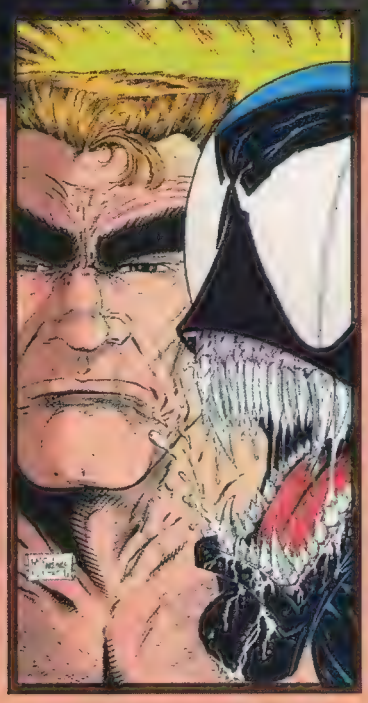
MARY JANE WATSON
The pre-Mrs. Parker would be played by none other than supermodel (and super-awesome) Cindy Crawford (red hair dye optional).

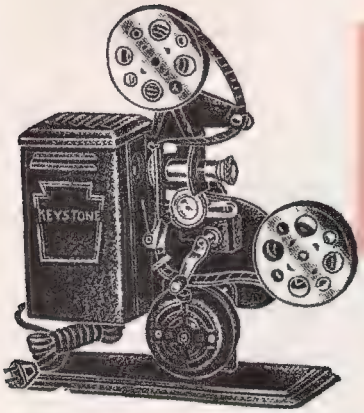
PHOTO: GENE SHAW FOR STAR FILE

PHOTO: FOX BROADCASTING COMPANY

VENOM/EDDIE BROCK
The main villain of the flick, Venom, would be the closest comic-to-big-screen transition when former L.A. Raider defensive end, and current Fox TV football analyst, Howie Long, puts on the symbiotic costume.

PHOTO: UPPER DECK SP#132





DR. OCTOPUS
Every movie needs a nutcase mad scientist, and Doc Ock's ours. Who better for the part than slightly nutso-looking Larry Drake, best known as Benny from *L.A. Law*, and as the villain Durant from *Darkman*.

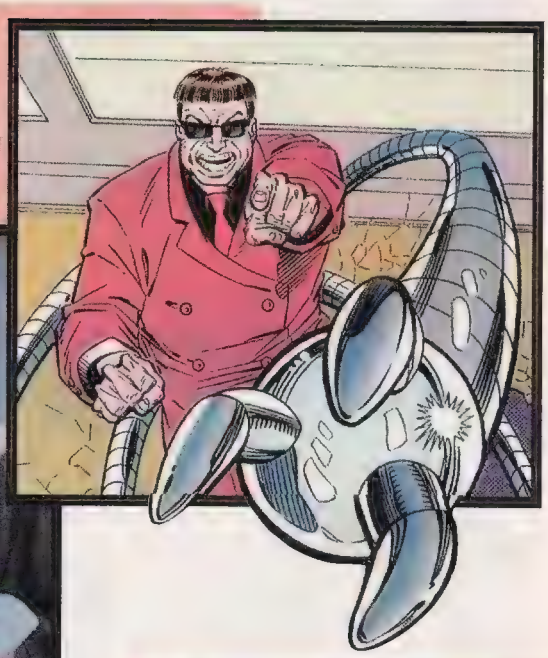
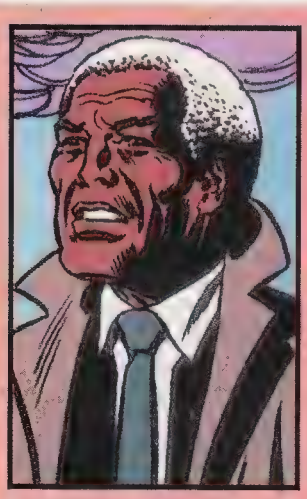


PHOTO: MELINDA SUE GORDON

J. JONAH JAMESON
You couldn't even think about doing a Spidey flick without J. Jonah, and ours would be played to a T by Michael Douglas, sporting his buzz cut from *Falling Down*.

PHOTO: STARCHIVES



ROBBIE ROBERTSON
And Jonah's right-hand man, Robbie, would be played by Robert Guillaume, best known as the lead character in TV's *Benson*.

PHOTO: VERNE ZUFFANTE FOR STAR FILE

Photo: Mike Spiotto for Star File

AUNT MAY
Though our first choice was the late Jessica Tandy, Petey's eternal aunt would be played by Katherine Hepburn, best known for just being Katherine Hepburn.

UNCLE BEN
Though he'd get plugged early on in the flick, Eddie Jones, who plays another father figure, Pa Kent from *Lois & Clark*, would be a perfect Ben Parker.

Photo: Danny Feld for Capitol Cities/ABC Inc.

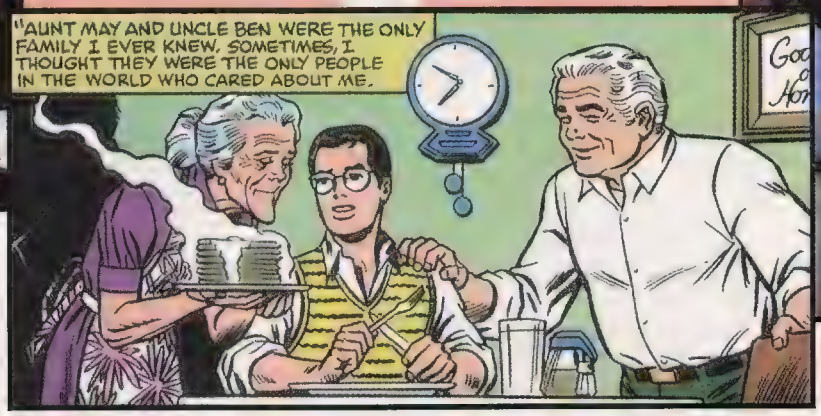
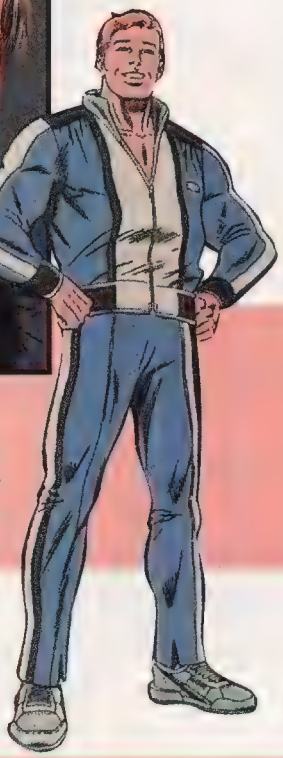


Photo: Capitol Cities/ABC Inc.

BETTY BRANT
Jonah's strong-willed secretary would be played by Dana Delany, known for her role in TV's *China Beach*, the voice of Bruce's girlfriend Andrea in the *Mask of the Phantasm* film, and more recently, the box-office bomb, *Exit to Eden*.

Photo: Capitol Cities/ABC Inc.



FLASH THOMPSON
Peter's arch-nemesis in civilian life isn't much of a stretch for Bill Fagerbakke, who plays pretty much the same character (though a lot nicer) in the sitcom *Coach*.

Now, tell us you wouldn't go see that flick at least 17 times! So c'mon, you Hollywood weas—er, people, whaddaya waitin' for? There're whole universes out there just full of ideas, all waitin' to be brought to life! ☆

When not trying to figure out what happened to Adam Rich from Eight is Enough, *the* Wizard *Bullpen spends its time wondering who's hotter: Dana Delany or Teri Hatcher?*

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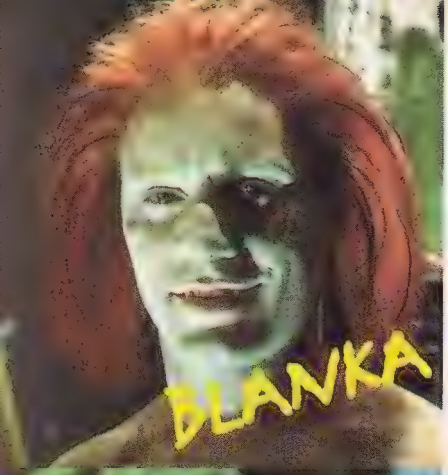

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For the name of the winner, available after April 21, 1995 send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Street Fighter Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard!*

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A NEW HOPE

Dark Horse Comics leaves its mark on the *Star Wars* legacy.

How do they love *Star Wars* comics? Let them count the ways.

"My attraction to *Star Wars* has been the ability and freedom to continue doing material I enjoyed so much in films," coos *Star Wars* cover Picasso, David Dorman.

"*Star Wars* gets under your skin," proclaims *Tales of the Jedi* illustrator Chris Gossett. "You become emotionally invested in it. *Star Wars* really keeps you up at night."

"I'm a sucker for things that are well-drawn," says *Star Wars: Dark Empire I* and *II* artist Cam Kennedy, "and *Star Wars* books have been fairly well-drawn."

"You start to live and breathe it," says *Dark Empire* writer Tom Veitch, turning philosophical. "At least I do. But then, I've made the choice to live and breathe it."

Once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away...OK, you get the picture. Or pictures. The grand trio of *Star Wars* space adventures featuring Han, Luke, Leia, R2-D2, C-3PO, and the rest of the gang, continue to be examples of that rarity: legitimate film classics. But no less impressive—especially given the renewed interest of a second wave of *Star Wars* films currently gearing up for production at creator George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch—is the history of *Star Wars* comics, 18 years young this year, an ongoing odyssey with more tentacles than a Hydra has snake heads.

Marvel Comics originally picked up the *Star Wars* laser rifle in 1977 and ran with it until 1986. The Marvel incarnation was made conspicuous by the major talent (like artists Walt Simonson and Howard Chaykin, among others) attracted to its 107 issues (and three annuals), and by a maddeningly inconsistent level of quality.

The magic returned when Dark Horse Comics picked up the *Star Wars* license from the Lucas folks in 1991, and immediately set out to remake the *Star Wars* universe in its own unique image.

"What we proved with the *Aliens* books is that comic books based on licensed properties could be more than a factory-processed gimmick," offers *Star Wars* group editor Ryder Windham. "What makes a big difference in the way we handle licensed material [including the *Star Wars* titles] is that we are genuine fans of the material."

Dark Horse started publishing *Classic Star Wars* comic books in 1992, which mined a mother lode of Archie Goodwin/Al Williamson/Russ Manning newspaper strips, and reformatted them into comic book form. *Classic Star Wars* also looked to its Marvel forefathers with a series of reprint books, *CSW: A New Hope*, *CSW: The Empire Strikes Back*, and *CSW: Return of the Jedi* (which reprinted Marvel's *Star Wars* #1-#6, #39-#44, and the *Return of the Jedi* mini-series, respectively), to get fans up to speed.

The company's next big step in 1991 was *Star Wars: Dark Empire*, featuring the creative talents of Tom Veitch, Cam Kennedy, and David Dorman. The series picks up the story some six years after the final film of the trilogy, *Return of the Jedi*, and finds Luke confronting the resurrected Emperor Palpatine.

Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi began its run in 1993—featuring Veitch and Dorman again, while adding Chris Gossett and Mike Barreiro to the mix—which, in turn, mutated in 1994 into the recent *Freedom Nadd Uprising* (with Veitch and Dorman aided and abetted by Tony Akins and Denis Rodier). Set some 4,000 years prior to the events of the first movie, *Tales* consists of stories of Jedi history.

1994's *Star Wars: Droids*, once again highlighting the work of Kennedy and new *SW* talents Dan Thorsland, Bill Hughes, and Andy Mushynsky, will be an ongoing series telling the early adventures of C-3PO and R2-D2, which took place shortly before the first movie.

Star Wars: Dark Empire II, the long-awaited follow-up to the initial *Dark Empire* saga, is presently unfolding as a six-issue, 32-page, monthly book. *Dark Empire II*, with Veitch once again scripting, Kennedy drawing the heavy metal inside, and Dorman contributing splashy covers, finds the Empire in retreat and Luke Skywalker attempting to rebuild the Jedi Knighthood while continuing to deal with the haunting presence of the Emperor. The presence of Palpatine is once again being felt in the galaxy, while a device more deadly than the Death Star fig-

by Marc Shapiro

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pposite: Luke succumbs to the Dark side of the Force.
ge: Luke gets ready for a comeback in *Dark Empire II*.
Inset: Han Solo talks tough.

Photo: NBC Color Photos.

ures into the Empire's most ambitious attempt yet to destroy the New Republic.

For Veitch, scripting this and other *Star Wars* adventures has brought him to the conclusion that the *Star Wars* comic book universe is in a constant state of flux.

"You can't help but think of *Star Wars* differently," says the writer, who also recently wrapped up another *Star Wars* title, *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith, Book One.* "It just has to change. What I discovered when I started working on these books was how little I really knew and how many layers of thought and detail are involved. *Star Wars* is an incredibly rich universe. It's almost like the *Star Wars* galaxy is a real place, and once you start exploring it, you learn more and more about it."

Veitch claims that while *Dark Empire II* still has a nodding acquaintance with the sphere of influence of the initial *Star Wars* films, he is truly being challenged.

"It becomes a challenge because this is, to a large extent, all new stuff. We're not working completely from the films anymore. What we've had to do is begin to start working more from the point of view of [using the] *Star Wars* imagination."

Another one of the challenged, illustrator Cam Kennedy does not consider himself a dull guy. But when it comes to his drawing and painting the inside pages of *Dark Empire II*, he's playing it pretty safe.

"I'm keeping the machinery, inventions, and the take on the characters fairly consistent with the approach I took on *Dark Empire I*," says the good-natured Scotsman who also includes *Judge Dredd vs. Batman II* and Lobo books for DC in his credit pack. "I know that sounds pretty dull, but that's the road I've decided to go down."

Consequently, to get Kennedy's *DE II* take, one needs to go back to the way he was introduced to the original *Dark Empire*.

"I had a lot of voices telling me I was mad for taking on *Dark Empire* because, for a lot of professionals, machinery is just a headache to draw. But I felt it was a good challenge. I've always been good with machinery and wreckage, especially after my Judge Dredd days, and, not being a comic book buff, I felt I could add something a bit out of the ordinary to the book. What I ended up doing on both books was throwing in new takes on spaceships and machinery, and the folks over at Lucas must like what I'm doing because they haven't rejected anything yet."

Kennedy, who feels "far more comfortable with the *Star Wars* machinery," found a tougher nut to crack in rendering the Dark Empire characters. "Going in, I felt I was letting myself in for some criticism if the characters did not look like the characters in the movies. But I said to myself, 'This is a comic book, and so it should be your interpretation.' So, in a sense, I cheated a little bit by getting a likeness, but not a real likeness, which would have resulted in a real static look, and basically rendering the characters as comic book characters."

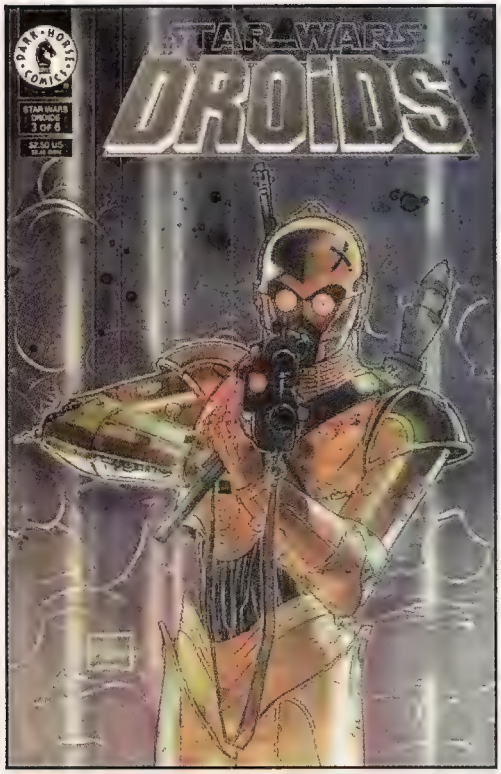
Cover artist Dorman considers himself "the transitional guy between the Marvel and the Dark Horse books."

"I was hired early on to create artwork to let people know that *Star Wars* was back and that these books would be capturing the element of adventure that was in these books."

Dorman, who is also doing a series of montage-style covers for a *Star Wars: Young Jedi Knights* paperback series for Berkley Publishing, saw his challenge on the first *Dark Empire* books "as reintroducing the characters to a new generation and to bring back an audience that had become disenchanted with the Marvel books."

"In the *Dark Empire* books, Cam [Kennedy] tends to take his visuals over the top and Tom

The millennium Falcon leads the charge in Dark Empire II. The cover to Droids #3 (updated).



[Veitch] likes to plot these huge battle sequences," intones Dorman. "The cover ends up being a springboard; my take on what they do. Even though a book may be 18 pages of action and six pages of dialogue, I may feel that an action cover wouldn't work because what's going on beyond the action is more important in terms of grabbing the reader."

Grabbing the reader and not letting go is shaping up as the main strength of the other new *Star Wars* kid on the block, *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith, Book One*. This mouthful of a title, a two-volume, six-issue-per-volume series, picks up where *The Freedom Nadd Uprising* left off. To wit: A foolish young Jedi has reawakened the powerful Dark Lords, who bring back their master plan to conquer the Sith, a long-thought-extinct race with powers of their own. Chris Gossett is handling the interior design, while Hugh Fleming is handling the painted cover chores.

The result, according to writer Veitch, "is a lot of havoc."

Veitch, who is co-authoring this series with *Star Wars* novelist Kevin J. Anderson, says that the time frame of *Dark Lords of the Sith*—which has the standard 4,000-years-before-the-films *Tales of the Jedi* setting—has been his biggest challenge.

"Up to this point, everybody has been pretty much working in *Star Wars* present," he explains. "The big challenge here is to run the clock backwards. We've got to think backwards, think retro. Sure they had light drive, hyperspace, and laser weapons, but they were earlier forms of these things."

The co-writing process with Anderson, writer of the novels *Jedi Search*, *Dark Apprentice*, and *Champions of the Force*, has not been a major hurdle, Veitch notes. "We've basically been functioning as editors. We would each write part of a script, exchange them, and then rewrite them. It's worked out real well."

Chris Gossett recalls that at the time he finished up his stint on *Tales of the Jedi*, his feelings were a mixture of elation and frustration.

"When I was finishing up *Jedi*, I thought to myself, 'Man! This is a shame, because only now do I feel like I'm drawing *Star Wars* the way I really wanted to.' And then it was over. But then I got the *Dark Lords* book and another crack at this world."

Gossett's pre-*Star Wars* claim to fame was a character called Black Angel for a series of anthology books put out by CFW Enterprises as an adjunct to its martial arts magazines. He did the retro design thing to a large extent on *Tales of the Jedi*; incorporating designs from the films and "putting myself in a mindset where the technology and characters would be totally romantic and represented in a mythic sense."

He offers that the retro and mythic aspects are playing a large part in his *Sith* work.

"Working on *Sith* has been great because I've been able to take the technology and the character designs much further and into places, in terms of design, that I really wanted to go. This book [has] literally a cavalcade of stars, and you really get to find out more about them, which, in turn, allows me to go deeper into the story and the characters; who they are and what makes them do the things they do."

Gossett says that his work on *Dark Lords of the Sith* has gone much smoother than his original *Tales of the Jedi* outing, thanks in large part to his ability to reign in his enthusiasm for the *Star Wars* universe.

"What happened is that along the way I gave up the notion of everything having to literally drip *Star Wars* and my having to be the greatest *Star Wars* artist of all time. That's when this book really started flowing for me. What I discovered is that the less you construct something, the more *Star Wars*-like the work becomes."

A big part of working the *Star Wars* field is dealing with the dictates of Master George Lucas. But the consensus among the comics creators is that there is a lot more freedom in putting *Star Wars* to the comic book page than might be expected.

"My only guideline from Lucas has been to stick with something that works within the story of a particular issue and to not go off on a tangent," says cover guy Dorman. "Beyond that, I would say that I'm less bound by what Lucasfilms says than either Cam or Tom."

"Our job is to go to the Dark Horse editors and tell them what we want to do," chuckles Veitch. "Then the editor says, 'That's great,' and what we've presented goes to Lucas for his approval. The Lucas people are there for every step. Even when it gets down to the dialogue balloons, we'll get notes. But there is still quite a bit of freedom to do our thing."

"I've done 10 books so far," adds Kennedy, "and so far there has been no comment, so I must be doing something right."

The creators also concede that *Star Wars* is a work in progress that often has its fits and starts. Dorman, who has seen firsthand the evolution from the Marvel emphasis on linework covers to the current Dark Horse full-color pieces, is hopeful that the books will move away from an emphasis on montage to single-image covers. He also claims that the occasional lack of a character reference has been a problem and, in particular, the low number of available Carrie Fisher references have kept Princess Leia off the cover.

"The big thing is the likeness aspect," he offers. "I'm not a caricaturist, and I do need a good photo reference to work from. There's definitely less angst when I'm doing a project where I don't have to worry about whether Harrison Ford looks like Harrison Ford or Mark Hamill doesn't look too young or too old."

Dorman, on the plus side, says, "These books have definitely allowed me to play around with styles. On the *Tales of the Jedi* books, I was doing Frank Frazetta-style action covers with a much looser style. Now I'm dealing more with textures and colors and a more realistic portrayal of the characters."

Lest you think that *Star Wars* has about fizzled out as a viable comic book vehicle, Dark Horse recently announced that it is in active negotiation with Lucasfilms to do a number of new *Star Wars* titles in the coming year.

January kicks off with a one-shot *Star Wars: Droids Special* written by Dan Thorsland, penciled by Bill Hughes and inked by Andy Mushynsky. The book, which contains the *Droids* adventures originally serialized in *Dark Horse Comics* #17-#19, features previously unpublished preliminary illustrations by Hughes and a cover by Kilian Plunkett.

Star Wars: Tales of Mos Eisley, a story revolving around the infamous spaceport on the planet Tatooine from the original *Star Wars* film, will appear in the first three quarterly issues of Topps's *Star Wars Galaxy* magazine. The story will be written by Bruce Jones and illustrated by Kilian Plunkett.

Beginning a four-issue series run in April

Star Wars Galaxy Magazine

***Star Wars* fans rejoice! Topps's 68-page quarterly *Star Wars Galaxy Magazine*, which debuted in October, is off to a great start.**

Topps launched the project with the help of Dark Horse. A polybagged version of the first issue included a *Tales of the Jedi* ashcan from Dark Horse Comics, and two Topps cards—a chromium card with art by Ralph McQuarrie (the original concept designer with George Lucas), and one of Topps's new Widevision cards.

"The main thrust of the editorial [content] is to lend some freshness to the *Star Wars* property, as Topps did with its line of Galaxy cards," says editor Bob Woods, a former editor of *Starlog*. "The magazine is trying not to tell fans what they already know about *Star Wars*; rather, we're looking at new things to keep *Star Wars* vibrant. The response to the first issue has been tremendous."

Dark Horse is also producing an original eight-page comic in every issue of the magazine. The comic is edited by Peet Janes, written by Bruce Jones (*Alien Worlds*), and rendered by Kilian Plunkett (*The Mask* film adaptation). The first three installments of the comic are *Star Wars: Tales from Mos Eisley*, based on the spaceport where the famous cantina scene took place in the first film.

"We're also working closely with Lucasfilms," says Woods, "in following all of the activities between now and 1998, when the next original *Star Wars* movie will be out. Between now and then, they will be adding characters and storylines through the different products and novels. And in 1997, they will re-release *Star Wars* with four minutes of new footage."

Lucasfilms and Industrial Light & Magic will also be modifying some of the special effects for the re-release, as well as using a new sound mix that takes advantage of modern digital sound formats. Among the enhancements, according to reports in *Star Wars Galaxy Magazine* #1, involve Mos Eisley where background creatures will be added. New footage includes a scene where Han Solo confronts Jabba the Hutt, which was supposed to run in *Star Wars*, but went unused due to Lucas's dissatisfaction with the inferior technology of the time.

—Clifford Lawrence

is *Star Wars: River of Chaos*, written by Louise Simonson, penciled by June Brigman, inked by Roy Richardson, and covered by Chris Moeller. It tells the romantic tale of a young imperial officer in love with a rebel sympathizer who has ties to the royal family that once ruled their planet. In the *Star Wars* timeline, *River of Chaos* takes place between the first *Star Wars* film and *The Empire Strikes Back*.

The four-part *Droids: Rebellion* hits the stands in June, featuring the words of Ryder Windham, the art of Ian Gibson, and the covers of Kilian Plunkett. In this series, C-3PO, R2-D2, and Unit Zed, in a continuation of the previous *Droids* mini-series, pursue Olag Greck across the galaxy and get caught up in a rebellion of renegade droids. The story takes place five years previous to the original *Star Wars*.

Coming in September is the six-issue series *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire*, an adaptation of the first of Timothy Zahn's *Star Wars* novel trilogy. The book, written by Mike Baron, with art courtesy of Olivier Vatine and Fred Blanchard, takes place five years after *Return of the Jedi*.

Jedi fans can celebrate Christmas '95 with the beginning of the four-issue adaptation of Alan Dean Foster's novel *Star Wars: Splinter of the Mind's Eye*. This transition story between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* is being written and inked by Terry Austin and penciled by Chris Sprouse.

It doesn't stop there, of course. *Star Wars* titles currently in development, but unscheduled at this time, include a *Boba Fett* one-shot (written by John Wagner and painted by Cam Kennedy) and an X-Wing Fighters series, which will follow Wedge Antilles (the intrepid pilot from the films) in post-*Return of the Jedi* adventures, is tentatively called *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron*, and is slated for a July release.

"We're genuinely proud to publish *Star Wars* comics," proclaims editor Windham, "and we're looking forward to entertaining readers for years to come."

Whatever the future of the *Star Wars* comics, it's a safe bet that there will be plenty of creative takers.

"I made the choice two years ago to turn down everything else that came my way—including two prestigious *Batman* series—to live and breathe *Star Wars*," says Veitch. "It's just part of me now. I like the idea that they've always been very adult books. They're intelligent because the movies have always been intelligent."

"I'm not a comic book buff," adds Kennedy, "which may disappoint some fans, but in a creative sense, I think it's worked to my advantage. I'll always be interested in *Star Wars* to the extent that it relates to the movies. What I do like about *Star Wars*, unlike other books, is that, from an artistic point of view, everybody is allowed their own take."

For his part, Dorman insists that "everyone involved in *Star Wars* seems to enjoy doing the work. It's like there is something in *Star Wars* that urges on your creativity."

Gossett echoes that philosophical tone. "There is an amazing camaraderie that has formed by the people working on these books. After you've worked on it, you realize that you are involved in adding onto the timeline and the history of this galaxy."

But lest you think this whole *Star Wars* dialogue is ending on too heavy a note, Gossett runs in to save the day with this personal aside:

"When I'm at my table, doing my *Star Wars* thing, I often find myself so wrapped up in what's going on, that I find myself imitating the sound effects from the script. But then that's *Star Wars*, man. It really pulls you in." ☆

Dark Threepio, intergalactic playground bully.

Marc Shapiro is a freelance writer based in Pasadena, Calif., who lives by the credo, "When in doubt, punt."

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First Issue Cover: Pacella

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CONTEST

Fun with Meat!

PITT CREATOR DALE KEOWN, SCULPTOR CLAYBURN MOORE, AND YOUR BUDS OVER AT WIZARD PRESS WANT YOU TO RECEIVE A LIMITED EDITION BRONZE PITT STATUE, AND AT THE SAME TIME LIFT THE SHACKLES THAT BIND YOUR CREATIVITY. SAY WHAT? RELAX, WE'LL GET TO THAT IN A SECOND. FIRST, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN WIN...

Grand Prize (One winner)

A limited edition bronze statue (Only 20 of these babies exist on the whole freakin' planet!), standing a monstrous 12 and 1/2 inches tall, depicting Dale Keown's Pitt, that monstrous no-nosed alien from Image Comics. It's sculpted by the incomparable Clayburn Moore!

Second Prize

(4 winners)

A 12-inch, painted Pitt statue by Clayburn Moore—only 2,100 of these were made!

Third Prize

(10 winners)

A Moore-sculpted pewter mini-figure of Pitt, plus an issue of *Pitt* autographed by Dale Keown!

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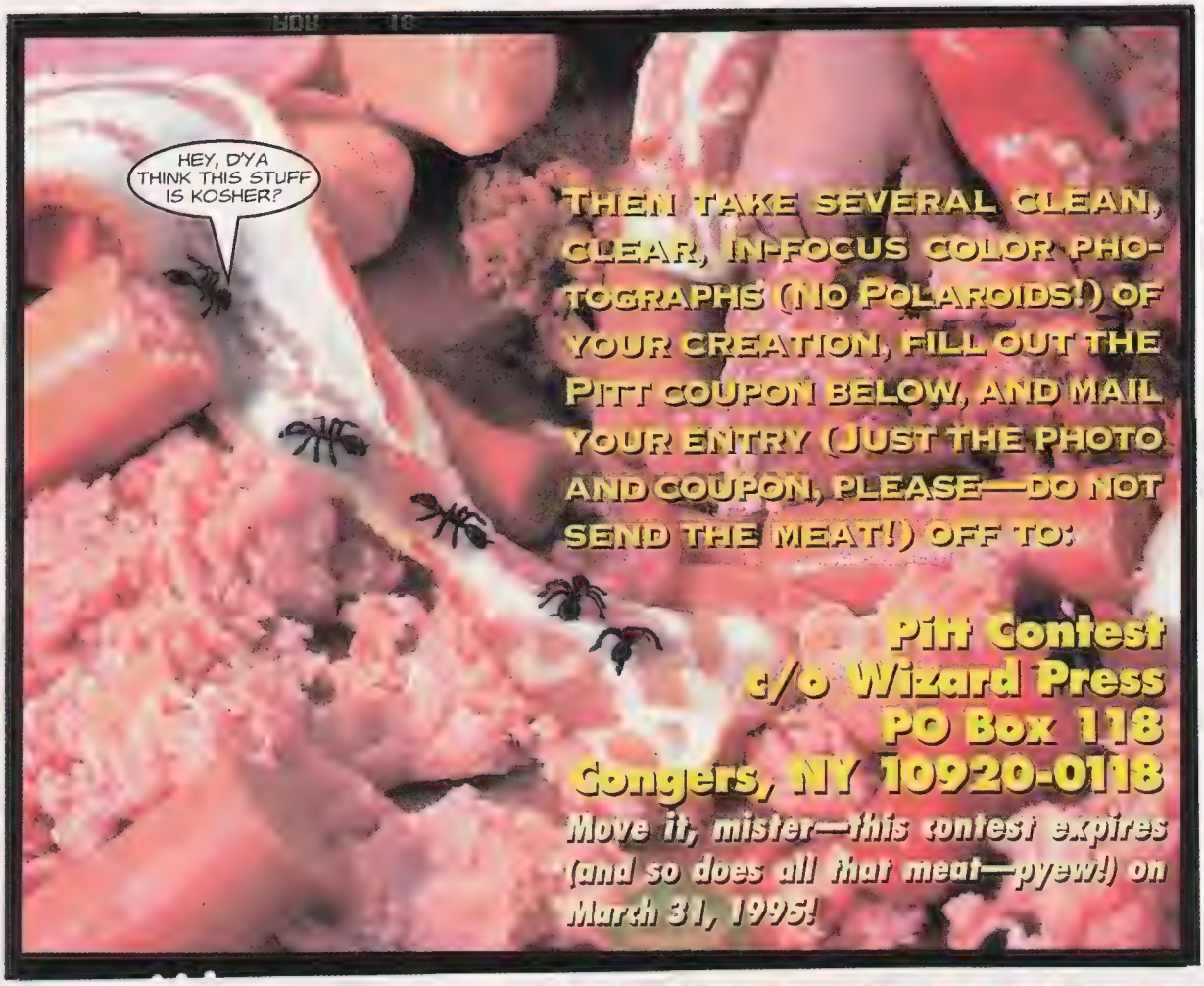

THEN TAKE SEVERAL CLEAN, CLEAR, IN-FOCUS COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS (NO POLAROIDS!) OF YOUR CREATION, FILL OUT THE PITT COUPON BELOW, AND MAIL YOUR ENTRY (JUST THE PHOTO AND COUPON, PLEASE—DO NOT SEND THE MEAT!) OFF TO:

Pitt Contest
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PO Box 118
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Move it, mister—this contest expires (and so does all that meat—pyew!) on March 31, 1995!

Meaty Fine Print

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Image Comics, Clayburn Moore, their immediate families, and...hey, whatever the hell happened to Sizzlean™? Ya know: "Why sizzle fat, when you can Sizzlean™?" That stuff ruled! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a three-by-five-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Include your Pitt sculpture photo, and mail each entry to Pitt Contest, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. When you're done sculpting it, barbecue your Pitt statue. Or, if you're Irish, boil it. Mmmm good! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on April 3, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after April 21, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Pitt Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

MEAT PHOTO BY V. HOLLAND

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the Drawing board

The showcase of comic book fan art.

We're taking a break this month from the usual Drawing Board entries, and instead are showcasing the best entries from the "Design a Madman Costume" contest from *Wizard* #33. Madman creator Michael Allred chose the Grand Prize winner, whose costume design will appear as Madman's costume in the pages of *Madman Comics* #5, published by Dark Horse Comics! The Grand Prize winner also wins a framed piece of original Mike Allred art, depicting Madman wearing the Grand Prize winner's costume! Congratulations to all!

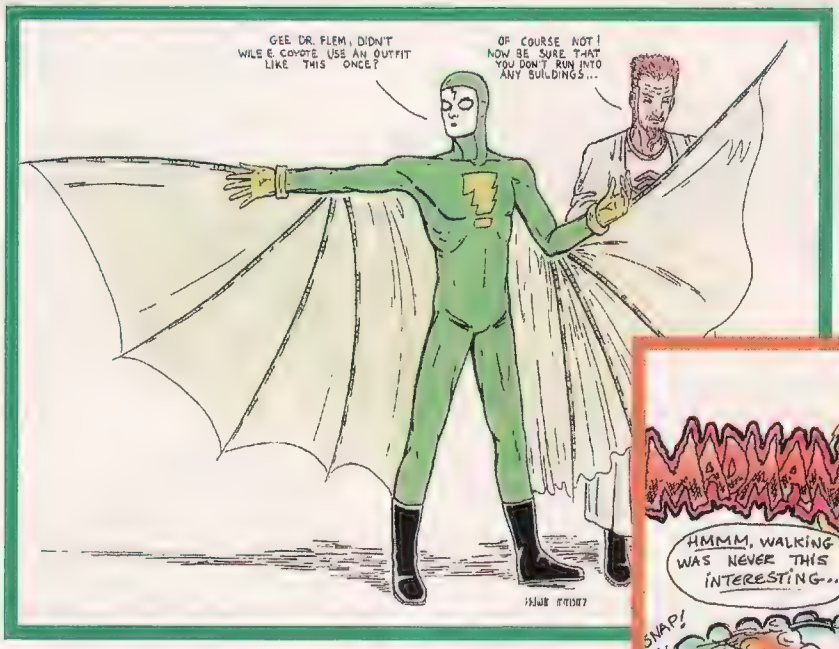
HEY, GANG, MIKE ALLRED HERE. WELCOME TO THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE MADMAN COSTUME CONTEST. ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, YOU'LL SEE WHAT THE TOP PICKS WERE OUT OF HUNDREDS OF ENTRIES. I HAD A GREAT TIME DOING IT, AND HOPE YOU'LL ENJOY LOOKING AT 'EM AS MUCH AS I DID PICKING 'EM!

GRAND PRIZE

By Greg Storey
San Jose, CA
This just had a really powerful iconic-graphic look about it, especially with the thick propellers jutting up from behind. I could see how I could incorporate it into the story.

Hey, it's the piece of original art that the Grand Prize winner won! Neat!

MADMAN & DR. FLEM ™ & © MIKE ALLRED. PHOTO OF MIKE'S FLOATING HEAD BY AL ORTEGA.



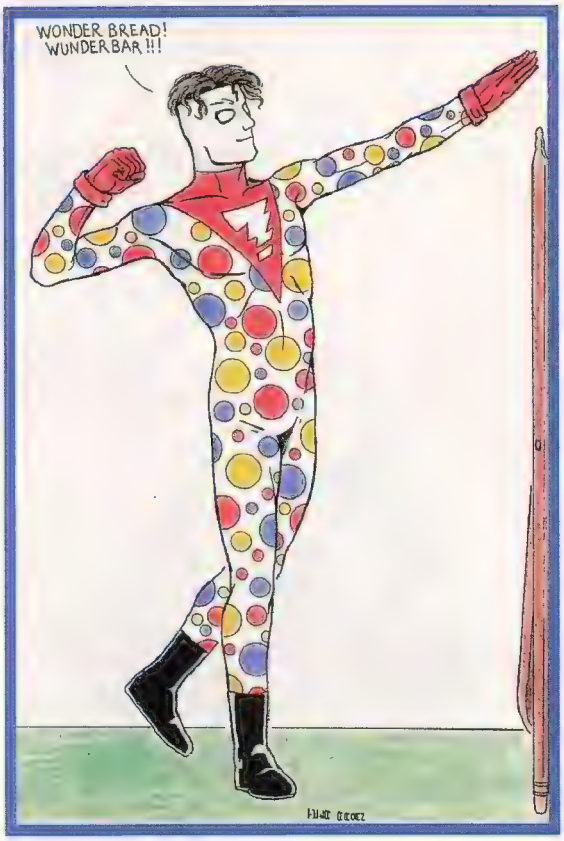
By Tyler Ragan
Burnaby, B.C., Canada
I actually considered using this one for the Grand Prize winner, because I could see how I could use it in a story. The main reason why I liked it was for its simple appeal, and mainly for the look of it. I probably would have changed the colors if I had used it.

By Roger Beauchamp
Boulder, CO
This one made me laugh out loud more than any other one that I saw. Not only because everyone loves to pop these things, but it could actually work to some degree.

By Andre Atwater
Denver, CO
There's a great look to this piece. There's a couple of cool ray-guns in the picture. Also, a lot of people may not know this, but when I first created Madman, he was called the Spook, and the original design of the costume was to suggest a skeleton. I liked how you were able to see Frank Einstein's face.

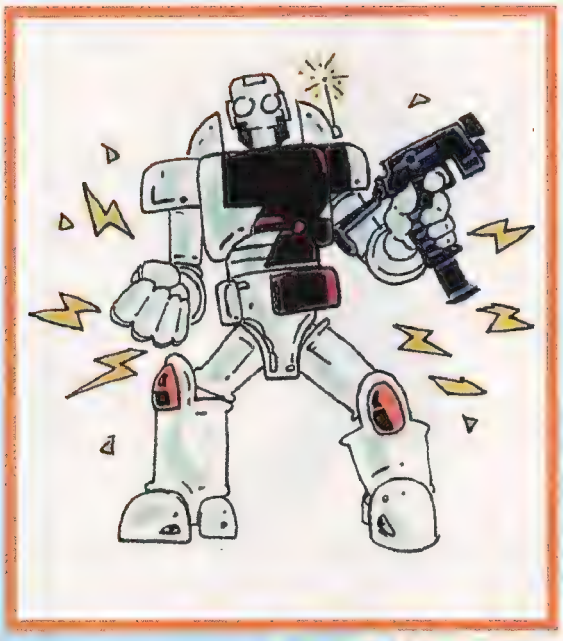
By Chris Meesey
St. Louis, MO
It's a strong drawing. I like swirls. It had a nice, humorous punch with the bugging eyeglasses.

By Tyler Ragan
Burnaby, B.C., Canada
I ate Wonder Bread™ when I was a kid. For nostalgic reasons, I like this piece.



By Randall Dahlk
Lakeville, MN
The artist appealed to me, because he's a Tin Tin fan. I really liked the quilted pads in the drawing. I'm a fan of the movie , and that's what this costume made me reminisce about.

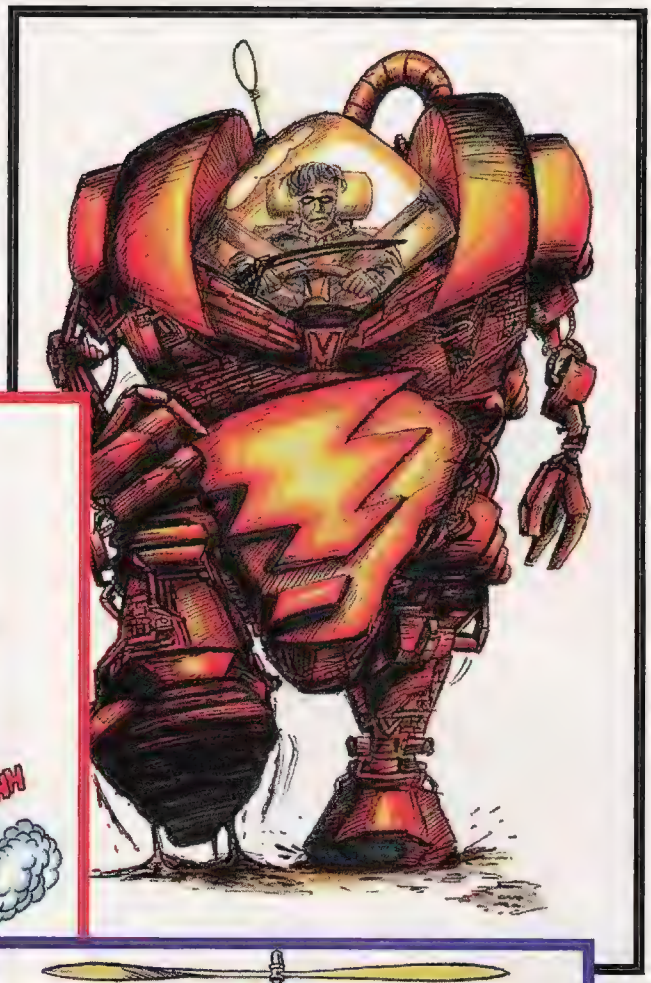
By David S. Quinn
Venice, CA
This one was one of the strongest costumes, as far as simplicity and power in the design. I liked the torso armor, incorporating the faceplate.



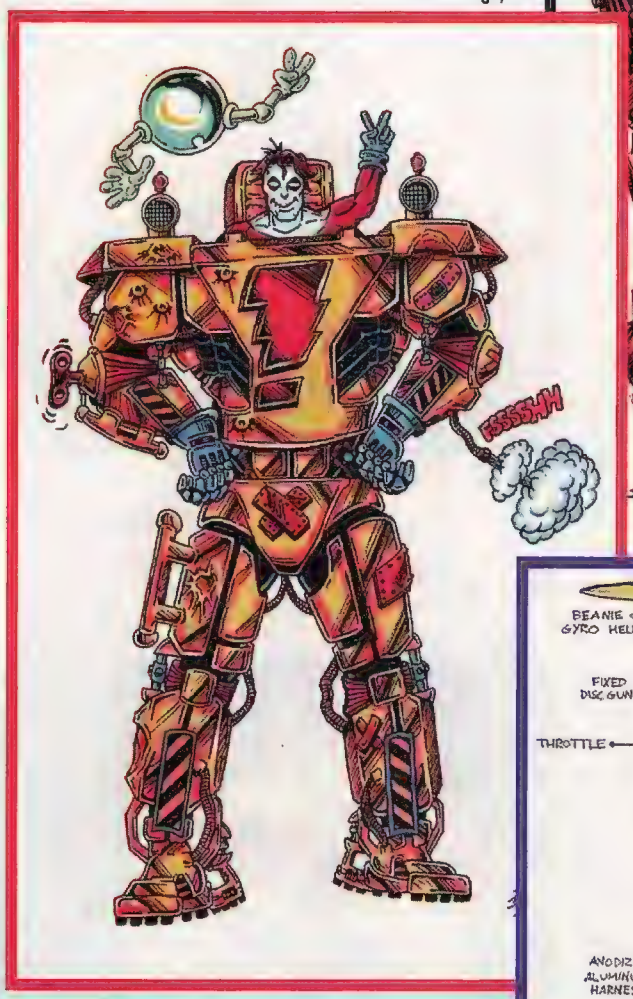
By Kaare Kyle Andrews
Saskatoon, SK, Canada
Great, great Iron Man kind of look. This one just had a really nice look to it. And I liked how the exclamation bolt is incorporated into the suit.

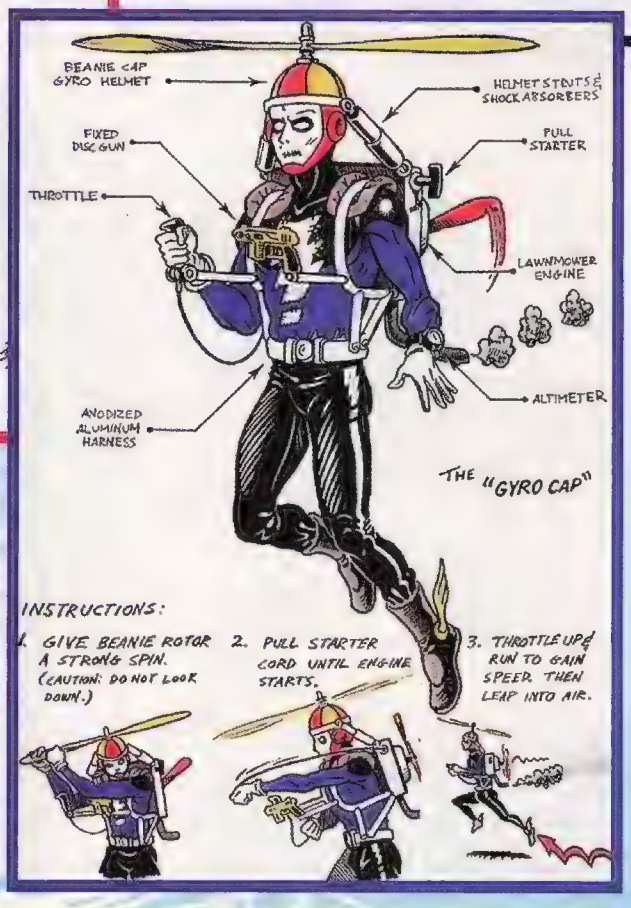
By Tom Urro
Tavistock, Devon, England

I'm a big robot fan. These have that nice, big, bulky, clunking, robot armor feel to 'em. So, I like them both equally for that reason.



By Tim Tobias
San Diego, CA



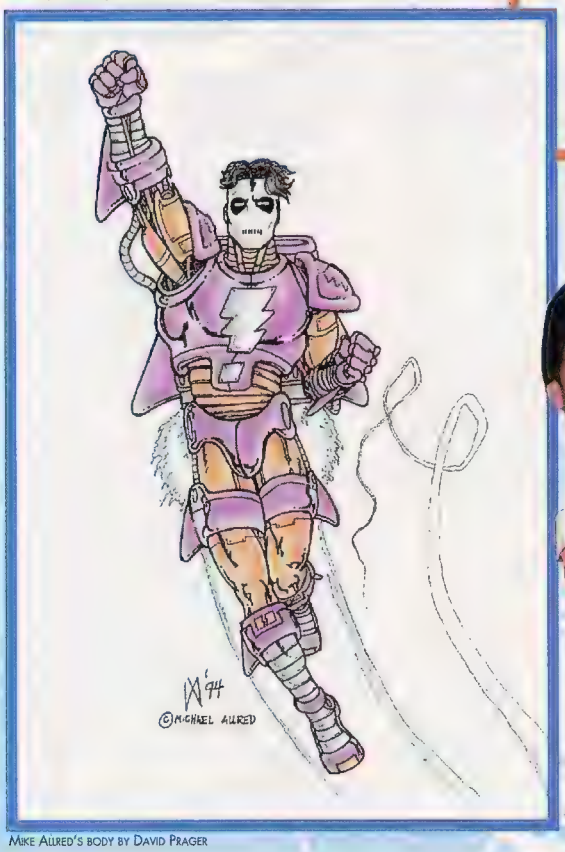


By Neil Kowalewski
Buffalo, NY
I like this for the same reason I like the Grand Prize winner. Looks like fun, but the Grand Prize winner was less silly. The design of the suit was really good, with the stripes down the pants, and the black-on-blue torso design.

By Gary Ambits
Wirral, Merseyside, England
A really sleek look, and I liked the helmet. Coincidentally, I designed a similar helmet for a character called The Blast, which you'll see in Madman Comics *#5. What I find most appealing about this is just the sleek, aerodynamic feel of the suit.*

By Patty Raab
Webster, NY
This has a nice Stormtrooper/science fiction feel to it, which I like.

By Michael Walton
Trabuco Canyon, CA
Again, this has that Iron Man feel to it. It's a great design. I love the fins on the rocket suit, and that reinforced armor around the neck and waist. I'd actually rank this one quite high, as one of my favorites.



THIS CONTEST WAS A LOT OF FUN, AND I WOULDN'T MIND DOING THIS AGAIN. IT WAS ACTUALLY DIFFICULT GOING THROUGH HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF THESE, AND TRYING TO NARROW THEM DOWN TO WHERE I COULD START RANKING THEM. IT WAS THE FUNNEST, MOST DIFFICULT THING I'VE HAD TO DO THIS YEAR. WEE-HA! I HAD A GOOD TIME. A LOT OF IMAGINATIVE ENTRIES—REALLY NICE ART PIECES. I HOPE THE GRAND PRIZE WINNER WILL LIKE HOW I USED HIS DESIGN IN ISSUE #5. THERE'S A LOT OF TALENTED PEOPLE OUT THERE, AND I'M FLATTERED THAT THEY TOOK THE TIME TO ENTER THE CONTEST. SO, I'D JUST LIKE TO THANK EVERYBODY WHO ENTERED, AND I WISH THAT WE COULD'VE RUN PICTURES OF ALL OF THEM. 'BYE!

MIKE ALRED'S BODY BY DAVID PRAGER

CUT & PRINT

Join the animation bandwagon! We might get to see a Cyberforce cartoon in the near future.

The comic insider's guide to Hollywood.

BY DAVE GALVAN

SharPeR ImaGE On tV

Keep your eye on those Image titles! It seems everyone and their uncle over at that publisher is currently talking with Hollywood to put their books on the screen.

With Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.s* cartoon already on TV, and Sam Kieth's *The Maxx* cartoon due in February (see sidebar on page 70), my sources tell me that Marc Silvestri is in the talking phase right now with several animation studios to bring *Cyberforce* to the small screen. While names are not being released at press time, this deal seems to be getting bigger by the moment. Rumor has it that Top Cow has been secretly ironing out deals with several companies to produce the cartoon series as well as a toy line. Word on the street is that Silvestri has been buddy buddy with Graz Entertainment (which produces Fox's *X-Men*) as of late, and there is even rumor of the fourth network on the phone to Silvestri ironing out plans for a prime-time TV show! Whether this is true or not will remain to be seen, but the buzz surrounding the project is huge.

Now, what does this do to all the other Image properties? Rob Liefeld is still in negotiation with Fox about doing an animated TV series, and is talking to various producers about having other projects of his sent to the big screen!

As to Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*, well, Larsen is still courting networks on a cartoon series.

Spawn, right now, is also very likely as a TV project. HBO has been rumored to do several two-hour movies based on Todd McFarlane's Hellspawn character, and it seems that Peter Chung, character designer for *Aeon Flux* and *Phantom 2040*, is involved in some way. New Line Cinema is also looking at doing a live-action feature film.

more TeLeVSiOn NeWS

Wizard Exclusive! With Carolco on the verge of bankruptcy (again), Marvel is taking a more serious look at the proposed *Punisher* TV project which is the brainchild of S.C. Dacy of Alpha Productions. Dacy is currently talking with execs over at the Paramount Network, who so far like what they see in the project, and if they want to run the series, it's a good bet that Marvel will not say no. If this gets up and running, the earliest it would hit the small screen would be January of '96.

With all of the hush-hush secrecy regarding this project, I have been able to weasel out some information on the proposed series. Sophia Crawford is still in line to play the female Punisher (for those who wish to see her moves sooner, she is the pink Power Ranger when the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* shows the Japanese footage. She is currently in Australia filming the Power Rangers movie—see the film section for the scoop on this), although her character's name in the show has not yet been revealed to me. Her origin will not be that of the comic

CYBERFORCE™ & © TOP COW PRODUCTIONS

Now you can watch *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s* over and over and over...

book. She will be a psychiatric nutcase who sort of falls into being the Punisher when Frank Castle seems to die at the beginning of the pilot (no name has been pointed out as to who will play Castle, but my sources say that an unnamed WWF wrestler has agreed to take the role). After realizing that becoming the Punisher would be sort of therapeutic for her, she decides at the very end of the show to become the skulled avenger—just when Frank Castle returns. Our anti-heroine tells Castle that she is taking over the Punisher mantle for the time being and to stay out of the way, which he does—for now. This will keep Castle alive and well in time for his return, which will probably be during sweeps weeks.

The producers of Fox's *The X-Files* are working on a proposed pilot called *Space*. It seems to be a sci-fi shoot-'em-up, blow-'em-away action series set in space (obviously) in the vein of *Buck Rogers*.

Rumors have been running wild throughout the animation world of late, as to the future of *The Spectacular Spider-Man* on Fox. It should be noted that according to a representative of Fox, the series is set to debut in time for the February sweeps period. The show has already been delayed a year, so Marvel Animation has had plenty of time to put the show together. However, one of my trusty spies at Fox is telling me that some of the people in charge of children's programming are not happy with the overall results of the show. Sound familiar? It should. The same execs weren't happy with *X-Men* when it first debuted, but it was one of the top-rated shows at that time, so no one complained back then. It seems that the Marvel curse has struck again.

In other animated series news, as of January 24, you can pick up *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s* at video stores as well as comic stores. Sony Wonder will initially release two *WildC.A.T.s* videos starring your favorite Kherubim. The first includes the stories "Dark Blade Falling" and "Heart of Steel." The second contains "Cry of the Coda" and "The Evil Within." As an added extra, each tape will have an exclusive insert, offering free sets of stickers as well as a temporary tattoo.

Following on the heels of the first *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* tape, two new videos will be available from Sony. One has the episodes "Hide and Go Shriek" and "The Sleeping Beauty," while the other contains "Fare Tonight" and "Caveman." All this comes just as Universal puts the first "Tales from the Crypt" feature film, *Demon Knight*, into release.

Two Sony-produced videos of the syndicated *Mega Man* series will also come out. One sports the episodes "The Beginning" and "Electric Nightmare," and the other has "The Big Shake" and "Mega Pinocchio."

By the way, Nelvana recently sent out a press release touting the fact that ABC's *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* was the most successful show of its time period with viewers from age two to 11. Probably due to this success, Nelvana will also be producing a live-action *Hardy Boys* series, as well as *Nancy Drew*.

Doctor Who, the very popular British TV series, has long been rumored to be a possible feature film. It now seems that the likelihood on a big-screen film is nil, but the possibility of a TV-movie is still in the works! Amblin Entertainment has the rights.

M.A.N.T.I.S., the show that will never die, has been picked up by Fox for a full season (22 episodes) for '95. One main reason why the series will continue is that it has been number one with males 18 to 35. While this is not the best demographic, the show at least is not losing money, and, hoping to pull in more viewers, it has changed its direction yet again, this time going for a more science fiction-type look. You can expect more clones, cyborgs, and a little time travel.

FILM

The start date is March for the monster from Tokyo to return. That is when TriStar's *Godzilla* will officially start filming, despite the turbulent gossip about its demise. The film was originally supposed to start filming in November, but was pulled from that running date when it didn't seem feasible for everything to be up and running. Director Jan De Bont (*Speed*) has already shot some preliminary second-unit footage. TriStar has hired Stan Winston, FX wizard (*Jurassic Park, T2*), to do the pricey special effects;

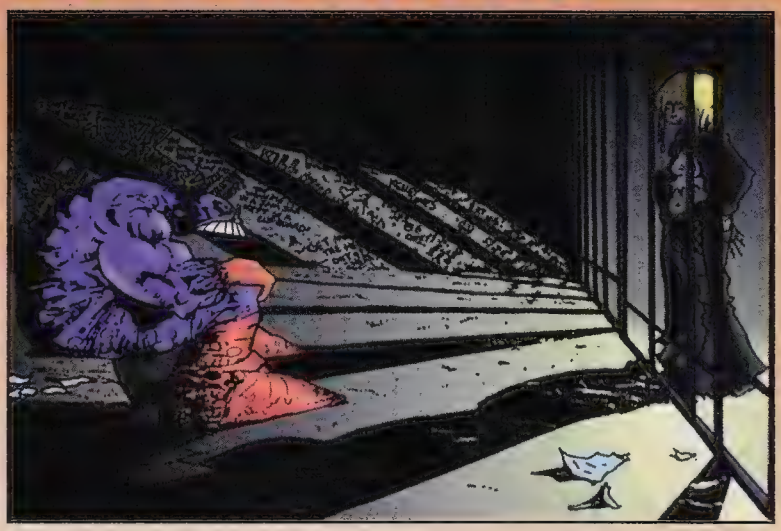
Concrete's looking forward to starring in his own movie, with a screenplay by Paul Chadwick himself.

WildC.A.T.s ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions. Concrete ™ & © Paul Chadwick.

MTV to the Maxx

"It's mine for better or worse," chuckles *The Maxx* creator Sam Kieth of his creation's leap from the paneled page to animated blip on MTV's early 1995 schedule. "By and large, it's a literal translation, so I'm not real proud of parts of the comic book, and those are the parts of the show I'm not real proud of."

The Maxx, which made its comic book debut in March 1993, was originally slated as a 10-minute grouping with another series called *The Head* and scheduled for a December 18 premiere. But MTV liked what it saw and decided to weld the completed 13 segments into six half-hour shows. *The Maxx* is currently slotted for a February 6 initial airing.



The Maxx does his best O.J. impression on MTV this year.

The Maxx show, produced by Rough Draft Studios and directed by Greg Vanzo, is taken almost from the thought balloon from Kieth's comic. But the creator assures *Maxx* page turners "that the TV show won't do anything to the comic book.

"We've kept the universes separate," he continues. "I get to tell them what they can do with the show, but they can't tell me what they can do with the book."

Bowing to the flighty nature of television programming, Kieth cautions that the Feb. 6 start-up date is subject to change, "but the episodes are done. MTV is committed. If the show bombs, they're still committed."

—Marc Shapiro

the big lizard invades Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, as well as other metropolises. Action sequences are expected to cost anywhere from $80,000 to $140,000 per set-up. Needless to say, the film is being carefully storyboarded.

Regarding the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* film, Fox expects to release it in theaters this coming summer. The cast is the same as the phenomenally successful TV show. It will mark the theatrical film debut for director Brian Spicer, although he did do the two-hour season premiere of the *seaQuest DSV* show. No one needs to wonder or worry about how well this flick will do in the theatres.

Der Bewegte Mann (literally translated into "The Movable Man") is Germany's most successful film of 1994. The comedy was inspired by gay comic books, but was scripted by straight men. How's that for politically incorrect?

Over at Universal this month, Dark Horse is using its increasing Hollywood power to work on its own feature projects. Paul Chadwick has finished his final draft for a script to *Concrete*, which is now in pre-production. 1993's *Virus* mini-series is also in development, as well as a film featuring Mike Allred's Madman. Arthur Adams's *Monkeyman and O'Brien* will be co-produced between Dark Horse Entertainment and Larry Gordon.

Who will voice Zen in the upcoming *Zen Intergalactic Ninja—The Movie*?

The treatment for *Zen Intergalactic Ninja—The Movie* has been approved by Zen co-creators Steve Stern and Dan Cote, as well as Mark Freedman of Surge Entertainment. The movie will feature a brand-new villain who has never been seen in any of the comics. Casting for the film, is still being determined. The tone of the film is said to be very hip, and there is a lot of humor in it. At the same time, though, it is also a serious action film with an underlying message about the fate of humanity. The script should be completed by the time this goes to press, and it will then go through all of the proper approval levels, just as the treatment did. The big guessing game right now is: Who will voice Zen?

Escape from Los Angeles is the proposed name for the sequel to *Escape from New York*. Star Kurt Russell (*Stargate*, *Backdraft*) and director John Carpenter have been talking lately about doing a sequel to the highly popular sci-fi hit. While they are not pushing this too far, they are considering it. ☆

Dave Galvan is a Portland, Ore.-based freelance writer who specializes in the entertainment industry.

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For a list of winners, available after April 21, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Boris Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Clothes Make the Man

A look into the dazzling wardrobe of Gotham's Dark Knight Detective.

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

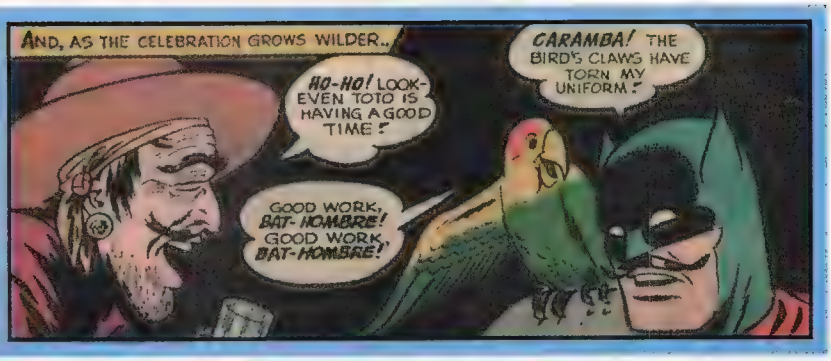
We never thought they'd do it, but they did. Sigh. After decades of the same ol' cool Bat-zoot-suit, Bruce Wayne is trading in his customary ensemble for some stylin' new duds. An improvement? Maybe. Anyway, we were quite fond of his old "civvies," but these new ones are pretty cool, though they definitely wouldn't have been our first choice for the Dark Knight's new look. Heavens, no.

We'd much rather go with one of Bats's Silver Age outfits of yesteryear. Something that not only exemplifies DC's grim and gritty Caped Crusader, but would also help him deal with today's more lethal villains.

So, join us as we explore the lost costumes of the Batman! (Cue funky theme music here: Da-na-na-na-na-na-na-na, Da-na-na-na-na-na-na-na, Batman!...Batman!...)

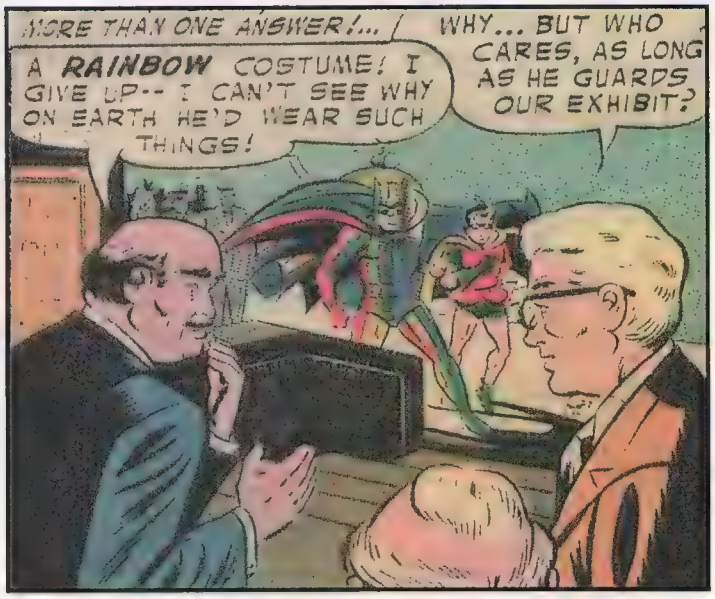
BAT-HOMBRE

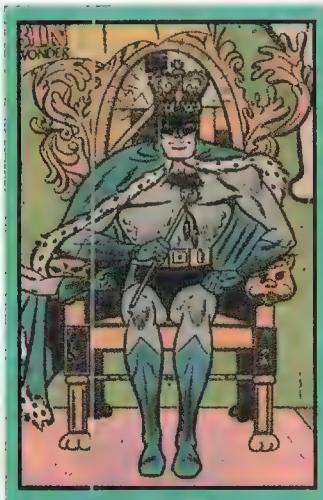
When Batman saves the visiting president of a tiny Latin American country (who speaks with an accent you can only get away with in a Silver Age comic), he relays to Batman his wish of having the Caped Crusader come to his homeland and train a Bat-Hombre to aid his country of crime (which he did, thanks in part to a parrot, but that's another story). The two best parts of this story are the Bat-Caballo (A horse should *not* wear a mask!) and Bat-Hombre saying, *"¡Caramba!"*



RAINBOW BATMAN

While saving a young girl from being run down by a speeding car, young Dick Grayson slams into a lamppost. The crowd cheers him as a hero, but unfortunately, the poor schnook's arm is banged up real badly and he won't be able to use it for a week. (Hey, Boy Wonder, that's whatcha get fer being a sidekick!) Batman fears that people will remember that Dick Grayson hurt his arm and might link Dick to Robin—who, naturally, would have a bum wing. (Seeing how there's only, what, 10,000 13-year-olds in Gotham, we can see how.) So, Bats figures that if he dresses in outlandish costumes, people would pay so much attention to him, they wouldn't even notice Robin. (Like anyone usually notices him anyway.) Well, they don't call him a supersleuth for nothing, 'cause Batman's ruse worked, and nobody suspected a thing (except that maybe Bats was gettin' a little soft in the head).



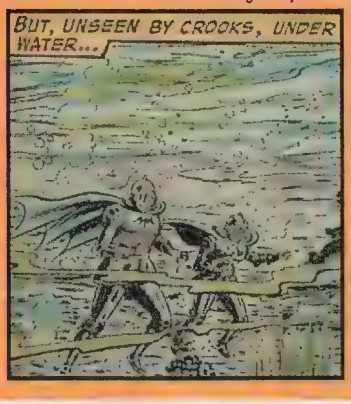


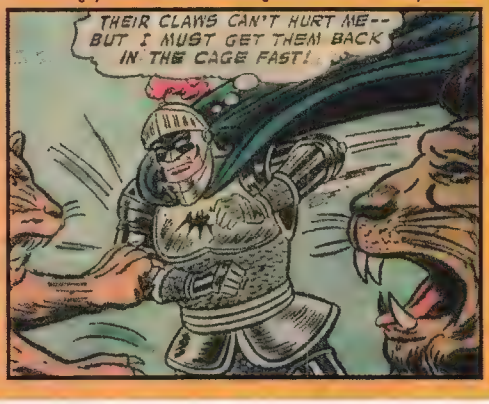
KING BATMAN

While King Eric of Norania is visiting Gotham, Batman spots Mayne Malan, a notorious thief, and deduces that he's after the king's jewels (Hey!). So, knowing that Malan is a dangerous thug, and that he wouldn't think twice about offing the king to get what he wants, Batman suggests that the two switch roles (which, seeing as how like 30 percent of Gotham wants Batman dead, is a pretty good deal for Batman, but sucks frog-ass for the king). Anyway, King Eric takes on the role of Batman, and Batman impersonates the king (while also nabbing the crooks and getting a loan for the country of Norania).

ARMORED BATMAN

Not wanting to cause a panic by letting the public know that he and Robin are searching for some stolen, dangerously radioactive, atomic fuel (Safety first!), the Dynamic Duo don suits of armor (which, though we don't understand how, double as diving suits) to conceal the fact that they're wearing radiation suits underneath. (These two must be hotter'n those guys at Disney World™ who walk around in those big Goofy costumes!) The bad guys never stood a chance against this kind of brainpower.



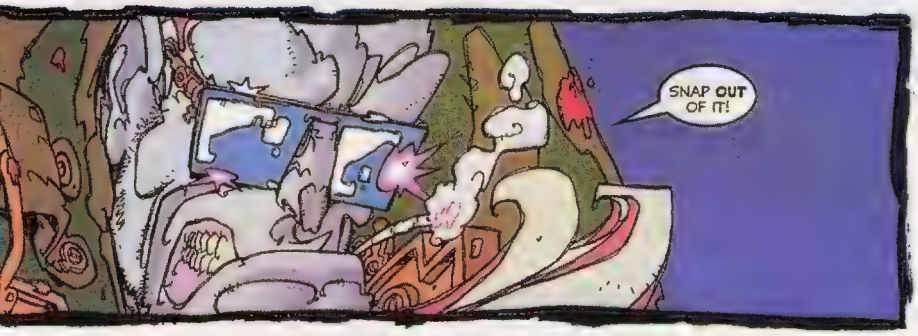


Our favorite? Though it's a tough call, and we all lost many a night's sleep over it, we'd have to say Bat-Hombre. Why? Well, he's got the one thing the others lack—the one thing that makes Bat-Hombre stand head and shoulders (and mustache) over, say, Rainbow Batman, or Armored Batman. And just what is that one thing?
In a word: Macho. ¡Viva el Bat-Hombre! ☆

The effervescent Wizard *staff would like to thank the guys over at Comic Cavalcade for digging up all these ridiculous Batman costumes. We couldn't a' done it without 'em.*

BATMAN AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS ™ & © DC COMICS.

Crossing THE Line



Interview

A candid chat with **Keith Giffen**, who talks of the ups and downs of his career, pushing the envelope, and the one character he wants to get his hands on.

by Jack Curtin

HAVING A REPUTATION as an infinite well of ideas, writer/artist Keith Giffen certainly shows no sign of letting up. The 42-year-old New Jersey resident is currently writing Image Comics's *Legend of Supreme*, Comics' Greatest World's *Division 13* and *Agents of Law* for Dark Horse Comics, while plotting Image's *Freak Force* and plotting and illustrating a four-part *Marvel Comics Presents* story starring his creation, Lunatik. While many think *he's* a lunatic with that kind of schedule, he admits he enjoys it.

Giffen, who is married and has 10- and 21-year-old children, first garnered success with DC Comics's *Legion of Super-Heroes*, where his run as a co-plotter/penciler with writer Paul Levitz is considered by many to be the definitive version of the Legion; not to mention that he revamped the team in 1989, a transformation that was met with resistance from many hard-core fans, but with acclaim by new ones. He also helped revitalize the Justice League in its most recent incarnation in 1987, adding an element of humor, a Giffen trademark. He gained more accolades with DC by plotting the successful first *Lobo* mini-series, and the first year's worth of *L.E.G.I.O.N.* Giffen went the creator-owned route in 1993 with *Trencher*, first for Image and later Blackball Comics. More recently, he had a brief writing stint on Image's *Bloodstrike*, and wrote Topps Comics's *Mars Attacks* mini-series.

Wizard recently got Giffen to slow down and talk about things.

TRENCHER ™ & © KEITH GIFFEN. THE HECKLER ™ & © DC COMICS. *AGENTS OF LAW* ™ & © DARK HORSE COMICS.

Wizard: How did you get started in comics?

Giffen: I knew from the time I was eight years old that I wanted to do comics. I loved the classic Silver Age Marvel Comics characters. Giant-Man was my first big passion. I never had any formal art training, though I did go to the School of Visual Arts in New York City for almost a year back in 1970-71 and learned nothing. Well, I did learn to bounce a ball for an hour and to get in touch with my inner self.

I really learned [to draw] by osmosis and by asking questions. Shortly after I got out of high school, for reasons I can't remember, I got to visit [artist] Frank Thorne's studio and look around, and I learned what a portfolio was and how to put one together. So, I developed my own and, after an abortive attempt to see somebody at Atlas Comics [in 1975], they said they'd be happy to look at my work, but I'd better hurry on over because they were closing the doors in two days.

I left it off at Marvel, where the receptionist assured me it would get to [art director] John Romita and told me to come back the next day and pick it up. Then I called the next day before going in and she told me to wait one more day, because my work was in with Johnny [Romita] at that very moment. When I showed up the next day, she was furious at me and started yelling the minute I came in the door. It seems that Bill Mantlo was in with Johnny when the portfolio got there. He was writing a backup series, "The Sword in the Star," in one of their black-and-white magazines and had just lost his artist. They both decided I'd be perfect for the job. But I, clever lad that I was, had left a portfolio with only my name on it. No address, no telephone number. They'd been trying to get in touch with me and couldn't. I got the job. It was a classic instance of being in the right place at the right time. Then I did a few other things for Marvel, including a Jack of Hearts one-shot [in *Marvel Premiere #44*]. *And I got to know [art director]* Joe Orlando at DC and picked up some work there, including doing breakdowns for Wally Wood on *All-Star Comics*.

And from then on, it was smooth sailing?

From then on, it was a disaster. I screwed things up so badly that no one in his right mind would give me work. It was tragic, really, because all these people—Romita, Orlando, Mantlo, [writer/editor] Paul Levitz, [writer/editor] Jim Shooter—did everything they could to help me, to try and get me to shape up. I lied

Here: Dark Horse's *Agents of Law*.
There: Trencher (top) and the Heckler want to get this thing started.

to them; I missed deadlines; I didn't answer calls or return them...You name the way you can destroy yourself in comics and I could write a book about it.

Is there a reason you acted the way you did?

I just came in with this "I'm gonna do it my way" attitude. I wish I had an excuse to dignify what I did, but I don't. It was just sheer, bullheaded stupidity.

It sounds awful.

It *was* awful. I just bombed out and left everybody in the lurch. I went off to New Jersey and had all these lousy jobs—I sold vacuum cleaners door to door; I was a repo man—and I still kept drawing. I put together another portfolio, much better than my first one, featuring a character of my own whom I called Lunatik, even though Marvel, by that time, already had a character with that name. But I never would show it to anybody until my wife said to me, "Look, don't you at least owe those guys a chance to hang up on you?" So I finally called Joe Orlando, who was probably the person I screwed the most in all of this, and he said, to my amazement, "Come on in, and we'll talk about it." Well, he made it perfectly clear that the first time around had not been a very pleasant experience, but he liked what I had to show him, and he took me on in sort of a probationary situation. So I got to do several eight-page ghost stories for *The Unexpected* with [writer] Bob Kanigher. Then Joe gave me a backup series with Dr. Fate [in *The Flash* (vol. 1)], and finally Mike Barr, who was editing *Legion of Super-Heroes*, and especially [*Legion* writer] Paul Levitz, who had the most to lose, gave me a chance on [*Legion*].

You came onto the book right at the beginning of "The Great Darkness Saga," one of the classic stories from *Legion* (vol. 2) #290 to #294, right?

Just before that, so I had a chance to get my feet wet. Paul had come back to the book a few issues before I did, and he already had this grand adventure mapped out. It was a great story to start off my Legion career with.

While a lot of people undoubtedly see you as one of the principal architects of Legion history over the past decade or so, you did seem to come and go on the title over the years.

Yes and no. When I left the first time, it was to go off and do an *Ambush Bug* [mini-series and a special] and *Justice League*, but I also [did the plots for the] *Legionnaires 3* mini-series during that period, so I was still connected to the Legion. When Karen Berger [then editing *Legion*] offered me a chance to come back on board, I jumped at it, because I found I missed the book. I stayed through the end of the standard format edition and into the first couple of issues of the deluxe format run. I can't remember why I left that time around, but it was for another project that I wanted to do. But as soon as I got the opportunity, I came back for the end of Paul's run and then re-launched the book with [scripters and occasional co-plotters] Tom and Mary Bierbaum.

And a controversial re-launching it was.

The thing that seemed to bother everybody—jumping the story ahead in time five years—was done specifically because I didn't want to be perceived as coming in and tearing everything down. While I wanted to begin my story at a really low point in Legion history, I didn't want that to be seen as rejecting what Paul had built. So, we moved ahead in time and let everyone know that somewhere in that five years something horrible happened and everything changed. What I intended to do was put the Legion at its lowest possible point, and then slowly build back to that glowing world that Paul saw.

But you ran into problems?

How do I put this nicely? The folks over in the Superman franchise hated our version of the Legion. Hated it. They didn't want us playing in their playground. So we got the word while I was midway through issue four: we could no longer use any of the Superman characters or history in the book. That was it. Just forget that they were a part of Legion history. Here we'd done this whole shtick to save

Legion history [in *Legion* (vol. 3) #37 and #38, and *Action Comics* #591], did the time bump so we wouldn't have to change anything, and they just took it away from us. We had a Legion who'd been inspired by a Superboy who now never existed, and now we were losing Mon-El as well [since Mon-El's existence is owed to Superboy].

I went nuts. I went ballistic. The storyline we were going to do was all about Mon-El. We were going to explain all the personality changes in Mon-El, deal with all his aberrant behavior, and pretty much cure him, then tie him up with [girlfriend] Shadow Lass and have them retire. It would have been a story which actually would have ended "...and they lived happily ever after."

Now I had to change everything right in the middle of a story. So, you know how issue four ends with Mon-El punching the Time Trapper, and then everything goes white? That was completely different from what we had planned. That was my way out. I figured if [readers didn't like] what we were doing [with the new direction], if all they wanted was the same old thing, I'd give it to them. I was gonna open issue five with little Rokk [Krinn, AKA Cosmic Boy] leaving his home planet of Braal to find work on Earth. I was going to start the Legion over from Day One.

Whoa!

Yeah, neat idea, huh? (Laughs). OK, it was just a temper tantrum. Tom and Mary talked me down and came up with the hourglass concept for issue five, which let us look at this alternate future where, since Mon-El had killed the Time Trapper [who had created Superboy, the very inspiration for the Legion], the Legion had never been formed. Glorith [the Time Trapper's successor] then came up with the spell that threw things back into the timeline we were all familiar with, and the Legion was pretty much as we remembered them, except a few things were different. There never was a Superboy or a Supergirl. There was Valor [the former Mon-El] and his cousin Laurel Gand. Things that happened in the Legion's past maybe didn't happen exactly as we remembered them. We tried to salvage what we could. We worked it out...but that, as far as I'm concerned, was where all the real problems with the Legion originated.

Appropriately enough for a Legion discussion, we've sort of lost control of continuity here, so let's just jump around and look at some of the rest of your DC work. Tell me about Justice League, which you helped revamp in 1987.

I pestered [editor] Andy Helfer for about three years to give me *Justice League*. I had all these ideas about turning them into an international organization with embassies and things like that which I wanted to try. When Andy finally gave in and let me and Marc [DeMatteis, scripter] and Kevin [Maguire, penciler] have a crack at it, it was just one of those situations where everything worked, where it all flowed naturally. People always ask how we decided to give the book a humorous tone. There was no formal plan—it just happened. The four of us were really in synch. To this day, we don't know which one of us came up with "Bwah-ha-ha-ha," and it doesn't really matter. That was great fun for a long time.

Aside from the humor, I think the most interesting thing you did was turn Justice League into a "buddy" book.

If you're going to do a team book, it seems to me that the characters ought to like one another. They ought to have the kind of relationships where they'd go out for a beer together. You see all these team books where the members are always fighting among themselves—who wants to belong to a group like that? You'd quit. So would I. So would anybody.

You certainly created a few unique characters in your days at DC. Let's talk about them briefly, starting with Ambush Bug.

I was doing a Superman/Doom Patrol team-up in *DC Comics Presents* #52 and needed a villain. There really is a bug called the ambush bug which is indigenous to New Jersey, and I always had the name floating around in my head. I used it for this loopy, maniacal villain who could teleport to wherever one of his little mechanical bugs were. People seemed to like the character, so when Julie [Schwartz, then Superman editor] asked me to do another story, using Superman and the Legion of Substitute Heroes, we brought him back and played it even more strongly for laughs. And the mail came in again, and everybody loved him. So Julie then gave me a series of backups in *Action Comics*, which my buddy Bob Fleming, who was on staff at DC then—and whose work on *Thriller* [a 1983-84, 12-issue mini-series] just blew me away—scripted. People kept on responding favorably. Eventually, as we kept pushing the envelope, though, I think we were making some folks at DC a little nervous, and Ambush Bug just faded into limbo.

The most famous and successful character you created at DC has to be Lobo. Yet, I hear that you hate Lobo. What's that all about, and how did you come up with the character?

Remember I told you I had this character I called Lunatik in the portfolio I showed to Joe Orlando? He turned into Lobo.

And I do hate Lobo. Of course I do. Lobo is a reprehensible character. How could anyone not hate him? The thing is, Lobo was created as an indictment of the sort of mindlessly violent characters you find in too many comics, and instead he became a role model for them.

So I hate him, but that doesn't mean I didn't like telling stories about him.

And then there's the short-lived Heckler series.

A character I would do again in a minute. If DC called and said they wanted to do a Heckler comic, I wouldn't give it a second thought. I'd go right back to work—and I would probably fail just as grandly as I did the first time.

What is the character's appeal to you? And why did it fail in the marketplace?

DARKSEID, LEGION, *JUSTICE LEAGUE*, AND AMBUSH BUG ™ & © DC COMICS.

I thought *The Heckler* would work because it was a feel-good superhero book. This guy was the Heckler just because he got a kick out of being the Heckler. It was meant to be a fun, check-your-brains-at-the-door kind of book. In fact, the character was patterned so strongly after Bugs Bunny that I'm surprised so few seemed to notice. Then again, people stayed away in droves. I mean, most books have a sales decline after the first issue—we all know that—but this was a cliff. It got to the point where I would have walked in and asked them to cancel it if they hadn't already decided to do so. What a nose dive.

And yet, it's one of my all-time favorite projects. I like the concept, the fact that this was a superhero who wasn't violent.

Before we move on to your cur-

"And I do hate Lobo. Of course I do. Lobo is a reprehensible character."
– Giffen

WARNING: Contains Bad Taste In The Form Of Ultra-Violence, Icon-Bashing, And "The Finger." More Offensive Than Christmas Usually Is.

rent work for other publishers, we should talk about the controversy over your alleged "swiping" from the work of Jose Muñoz in penciling *Ambush Bug*.

When I first saw Muñoz's pages, I was totally fascinated. I just never saw anything like that before. A friend of mine, who shall remain nameless, sent some Xeroxed pages to me, and for about two weeks after that I didn't do any work. I just sat there every day and stared at this art. It was unbelievable.

Did you swipe it?

I certainly went over a line you shouldn't cross. But I didn't have anything on my board; I didn't trace; I didn't use a light table. I'm not sure you can say I'm "guilty" of swiping, and I'm certainly not guilty of the motives that some people ascribed to me at the time. Still, even if you do it by osmosis, even if you do it inadvertently because you've become incredibly influenced, when you cross the line, you cross the line. Whatever the reasons. When all the fuss started, I was appalled, because I was pretty much blind to it when I was doing it.

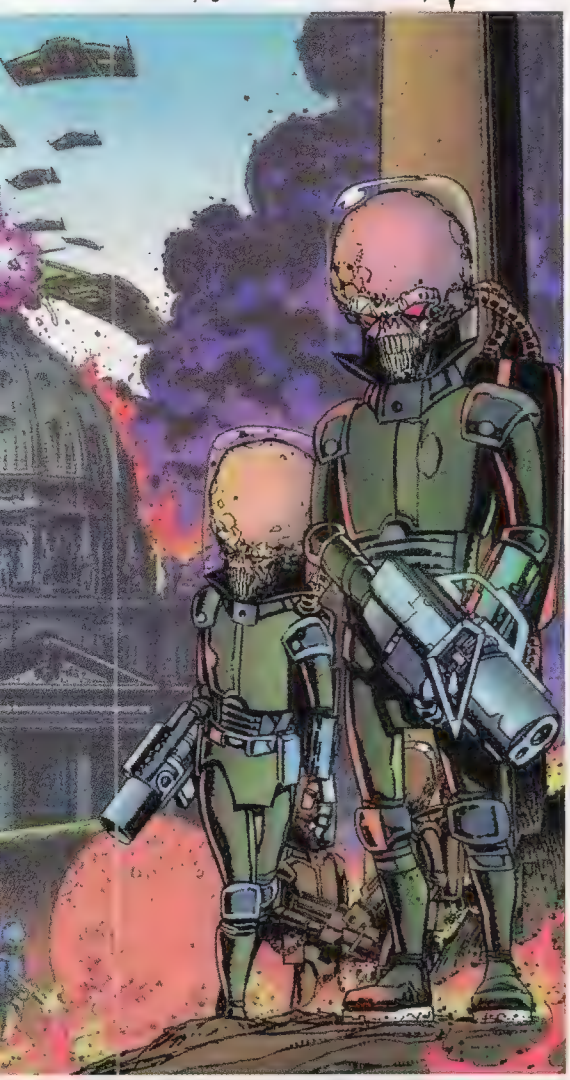
What really got to me was when they said, "Well, he did this to enhance his reputation." Hey, when I did that stuff, man, my star sank real fast. Nobody liked it, except for a handful of people. It got to the point where the only work I could get was the last few issues of *Hex*, that book where they stuck Jonah Hex in the future. It was damned near career suicide.

You're saying that...

I'm saying that people assume I had a choice in this matter. I had no choice: I had to do it. I could no more ignore what I felt, than I could ignore breathing. It became part of me.

Let's talk about some of the things you've been doing lately.

Mars Attacks, [the recent mini-series] from Topps, is something I am very proud of. I am really pleased with the way that turned out. It was just a joy to work with [series artist] Charlie Adlard, who just nailed the artwork. In fact, he's inking my pencils on the Lunatik feature I'm doing for Marvel, and he may be the best inker I've ever had work over me. The whole *Mars Attacks* project went wonderfully. It was one of the best experiences I've had in my career.



Lobo ™ & © DC Comics. *Mars Attacks* ™ & © The Topps Company Inc.

I guess it's safe to assume, then, that you're interested in doing a sequel?

We are talking about a sequel, and I am very interested in doing it. However, I've convinced myself that any sequel has to be better than the first series or I have no right doing it, so we'll have to see.

You mentioned Lunatik for Marvel. That's been running in *Marvel Comics Presents* #173–#176.

I'm doing that with Lovern Kindzierski, who's been known primarily as a colorist, and I think everybody is now finding out he can really write, too. We've totally reworked the character. He's like Lobo in that he's this testosterone-driven madman, but we grafted on what I call a "Frasier Crane" personality to him, so that he aspires to be more than he is. Lunatik thinks he's this highly cultured individual, but his tastes run to things like Elvis portraits on velvet.

You've also been doing some books for Dark Horse in the company's Comics' Greatest World lineup.

Dark Horse is a very exciting company right now. I'm doing *Agents of Law* for them, which starts in March. Dan Lawlis has done some breathtaking art for that book—if you think he was good on [CGW's] *Barb Wire*, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

You've been doing books for Image Comics, like *Freak Force* for Erik Larsen and *Legend of Supreme* for Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios. I presume that's another good situation for you?

Oh, yeah. I had done *Bloodstrike* [#4-#7], but I just couldn't relate to the characters at all. Then I mentioned to [Extreme editor] Eric Stephenson that I did have some ideas for Supreme, and they told me to give it a shot. I brought in Bob Fleming to do the script, and we developed this story that starts out as a standard Supreme story and soon turns into a real horror story. We don't violate anything that's already known, but we reveal a couple of nasty little things that nobody knows yet. They liked it enough that they created a new title for us rather than do the story in the regular book.

There were some pretty controversial scenes in those *Bloodstrike* issues, including one where Supreme violently obliterates the team. Based on the negative reaction that book has gotten, do you think that in hindsight, a warning label should have been placed on the cover?

COMICS' GREATEST WORLD

***Division 13*, the title that Keith Giffen is currently writing for Dark Horse Comics's superhero line, Comics' Greatest World, will end with issue #6 in May.**

"When the book ends," says Giffen, "we'll have finally resolved the whole Lamb-Carolyn situation and sown the seeds for some of the characters to move into my new book, *Agents of Law*, which starts in March. *Agents of Law* will star the very nasty villain, Law, who was introduced in *Division 13* #1, and the characters who move on will be part of a resistance movement against Law's regime in [the city-state] Golden City.

"Law has a tendency to make enemies—when he annexes California and declares it an independent country, for example, he makes a lot of them. He will be the most reprehensible character wandering around out there."

Giffen will also be doing the plotting and writing for a new, as-yet unnamed Dark Horse title similar to Marvel's old *Tales of Suspense* books, in that the book will be divided in half and feature two separate storylines. "Moving Targets" and "The Adversary" will both take place in Cinnabar Flats and deal with a sentient eco-system that begins to take control of everything.

—Jack Curtin

Hmm. I don't know. That's odd, because I was the one who went in and insisted that a mature readers label was slapped on the Lobo books; otherwise I'd have taken my name off the books. But looking at it now, with the fact that all books out there are like that, it seems to be what's expected. I'm always gonna go for how I'd apply it to my kids. If not a warning label, a label of content. And to be honest with you, I'm almost ashamed to admit, it never crossed my mind when I was doing it. I just wanted to see how far I could push the envelope.

You're also taking over the plotting chores on the new series for Dave Cockrum's old team, The Futurians, for Extreme in April, with artist Marat Mychaels. What are you planning with that one?

I don't want to go in and tear it up to pieces, and disregard everything that Dave did [with the characters]. So what I'm doing is taking the events [of the previous Marvel graphic novel and Lodestone Publishing title] and just shuffling them a little bit—giving them a little bit of what everyone seems to be calling that '90s twist. The best way to describe the Futurians is a solid, superhero team that really has no pretenses to be anything else other than a superhero team. Some superhero teams come together for the altruistic motives, and some come together because they've got no place else to go and they're outcasts. These people had no choice. They were conscripted by this one guy. So the guy behind the scenes is a real manipulative bastard.

Ambush Bug, Lobo, and the Heckler all belong to DC Comics, of course, but your character Trencher is all yours. Will we see Trencher again?

I like the character a lot, because he's unique. I don't think there are many celestial repo men around. At Blackball, though, we just couldn't get the books out there and into the shops. The character is definitely not dead. I do intend to do *The Trencher Guide to Comics* eventually, and report the results of the "Biggest Jerk in Comics" contest.

Two final questions. Do you think you'll ever work at DC again?

I certainly bear them no ill will, and I hope everyone there feels the same about me. I'm angry about some of the things that happened, sure, but they happened and now it's over with. Time sort of smooths out the memory of things. I guess the only answer is, we'll see what happens.

And finally, is there one classic character in comics you'd like to try your hand at?

Captain America, without a doubt. He's just a great character, and I have so many stories to tell. I can sit here right now and run the entire first year in my head. I'd probably start muddying the issue as to whether or not that's Steve Rogers under that mask. A little conspiracy theory is always good for certain books. I'd definitely play down that "man out of time" bit. For God's sake, he's been thawed out for 20 years now. Grow up. Stop whining. Yeah, Bucky's dead. You're here. Deal with it.

Yeah, I want Captain America. ☆

Jack Curtin, a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, Pa., remembers "the last few issues of Hex*" and figures that Keith Giffen has more than paid his debt to society.*

LEGEND OF SUPREME

As Keith Giffen notes (see interview), when the folks at Extreme Studios saw the plot that he and his favorite collaborator, Robert Loren Fleming, proposed for a Supreme mini-series, they immediately expanded their commitment to an ongoing monthly series, giving birth to *Legend of Supreme*.

"The original mini-series that Bob and I did makes up the first three issues of the book," says Giffen. "This first storyline is a very dark one, where we discover that there is a lot more to Supreme than anyone has guessed. When it's over, people will be looking at him in a new light.

"Then, in issue #4, we have a complete change of pace. It is extremely funny—sometimes I think it should have been an Ambush Bug story rather than a Supreme story—and co-stars Bloodwulf from [1993's] *Darker Image* #1. I hope that issue will send a clear signal to the readers: don't try to second guess us on this title. We'll be doing the unexpected a lot."

That fourth issue begins a string of adventures in outer space, after which Supreme will return to Earth, only to find that it is not the Earth he left. "We're borrowing Alan Moore's 'Cosmic Waiting Room' concept, and we'll pass Supreme through there to put him on an Earth without superheroes."

Eventually, Supreme will return to his rightful world and resume his adventures in the Image Universe.

—Jack Curtin

FREAK FORCE →

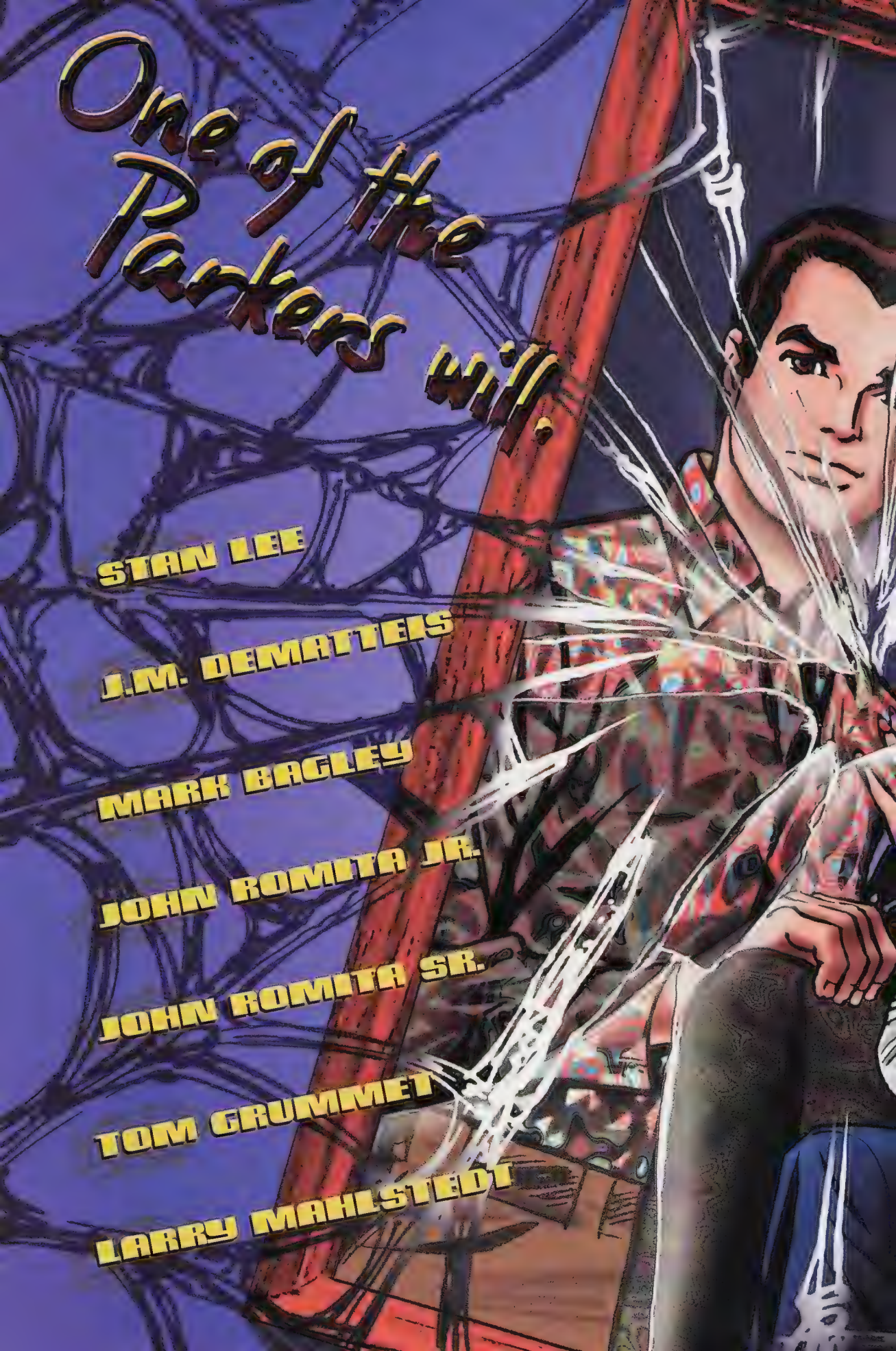
"*Freak Force* is just a great book to do," says Keith Giffen, "because it's a very spontaneous sort of process. Erik [Larsen, the series creator] and I will get together and chat about a few things, toss some ideas around, and then, most of the time, I'll just take the bit in my teeth and start churning it out. After a while, he'll call me up and ask, 'Did we talk about this?'"

That said, Giffen acknowledges that there are some plans afoot for 1995. "We have this special 'all-slaughter' issue planned for #13 or #14, which should be out around the time of this issue of *Wizard*, or perhaps a little later. We have this villain who's just gonna go through Freak Force like a scythe, and for just a little while there, the book stops being very funny. Also, by the end of the summer, we should have resolved all the subplots that have been hanging around for God knows how long."

—Jack Curtin

FREAK FORCE ™ & © ERIK LARSEN

Who will die in the web of death?


One of the Parkers will
STAN LEE
J.M. DEMATTEIS
MARK BAGLEY
JOHN ROMITA JR.
JOHN ROMITA SR.
TOM GRUMMET
LARRY MAHLSTEDT

WHO?
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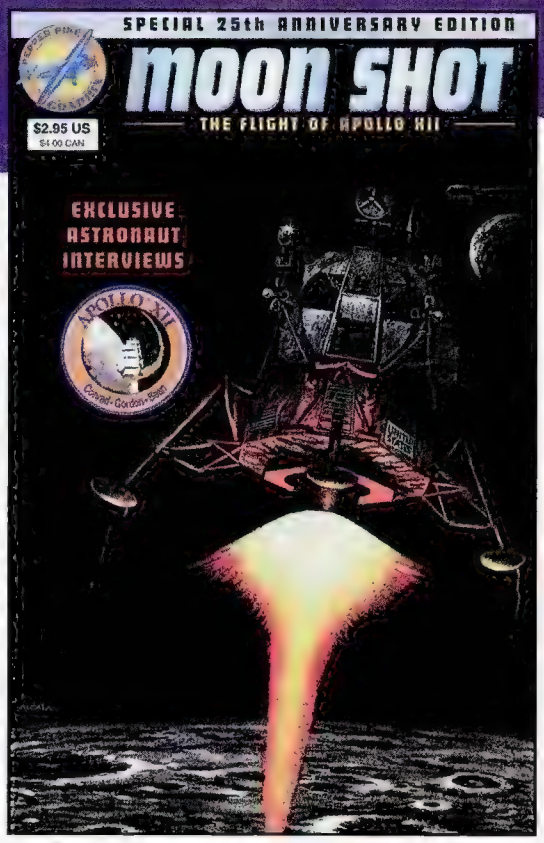
Moon Shot

MOON SHOT

The comic book featuring off-world explorers and outer space experiments.

And it's all true.

By Ruth Morrison



Space: the final frontier. No, no, it's not another *Star Trek* comic; in fact, it's quite the opposite. Pepper Pike Graphix is taking you on a voyage back to the beginnings of space travel and all the problems associated with it, in the company's new comic *Moon Shot*, now available in stores.

If your favorite comic shop doesn't carry this wondrous tale, though, you might consider checking your local museum gift shop. See, here's the kicker about this book: *it's all true.*

Written by D.C. Agle with art by comic veteran Alfredo Alcala, *Moon Shot* is the story of the 1969 Apollo 12 mission, the second of the eight successful American lunar landings. According to Nancy Conrad, editor-in-chief of Pepper Pike Graphix and wife of Apollo 12 astronaut Captain Charles "Pete" Conrad Jr., most people don't know there were missions beyond Apollo 11, "but Apollo 12 was the first time scientific experiments were performed off the planet."

One of Apollo 12's main assignments—which you'll learn from reading *Moon Shot*—was the deployment of A.L.S.E.P. (Apollo Lunar Surface Experiments Package), the first full-fledged scientific station to be set up on another world. It operated until 1977, when budget cuts shut it down.

Apollo 12 wasn't a mission short on drama, either. Oh, sure, Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first to soil their boots with moon dust, but Apollo 12 proved space travel was no fluke, and assured America and the world that to boldly go to the moon and

MOON SHOT ™ & © PEPPER PIKE GRAPHIX, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

beyond may not be an easy task, though one definitely within human reach.

Anyway, Neil and Buzz had it easy. They weren't hit by lightning about 30 seconds off the pad while sitting on an atomic bomb's worth of fuel, as Apollo 12 was. *Moon Shot* mentions that it was Conrad's decision alone to continue onward, knowing quite well that the spaceship could fail thanks to Mother Nature's electrical shock. This meant he and his two fellow astronauts—and friends—Richard "Dick" Gordon and Alan "Al" Bean, would die if his decision were wrong. How did that feel, and what was it like? And just how did they go to the bathroom up in space? Read the comic; it's all there.

"We decided to do [a book about] Apollo 12 because we could get all three astronauts: Pete, Al Bean, and Dick Gordon," says Agle. "They all looked it over and made sure it was correct." This made for a longer creative process, but the people at Pepper Pike Graphix are confident that the book is both entertaining and technically sound.

"I think we did a phenomenal job," Agle exclaims.

The idea originated with *Moon Shot* writer and Pepper Pike Graphix co-founder Agle. While visiting the Smithsonian Aerospace Museum, he noticed a kid doing what kids do (ask questions) and parents doing what parents do (try to answer their kids even when they have no clue what they're talking about). Agle suggested to the parents that they purchase informative books at the museum gift shop and give them to their kids.

A mother looked at Agle almost disgustedly. "My kids," she told him, "read nothing but comic books."

"I remembered how I read an *A Tale of Two Cities* comic book for an English test," says Agle, "and getting those Scholastic comic books in school. These made learning easier, and more interesting. I thought someone should do something in a media that kids want to read, and would tell them the story."

Agle decided to give it a go, but admits, "I didn't know anything about comics. I didn't grow up with them. I grew up reading about pilots and astronauts. To me, they were the real heroes: Charles Lindbergh, Neil Armstrong, and Pete Conrad. It's great to have a fantasy life about things that will never be, but these guys did it for real.

"I pitched this idea to every single comic publisher, and they all told me to take a hike." Then Agle met Conrad himself.

"I told Pete I would like to write a book about him." The initial idea did not appeal to the captain. "People have come to him a great deal," explains Agle, "asking him to do memoirs, but he is still living his life." Conrad didn't think the world needed another thick book about the moon trip that only space enthusiasts would buy. "He doesn't have the desire to preach to the church choir."

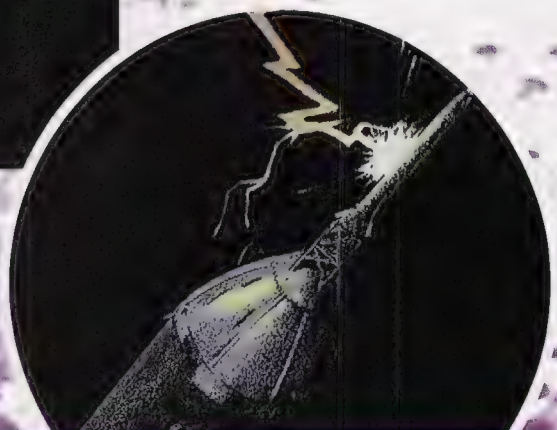
But then Agle said the magic words: he wanted it to be a comic book. That made all the difference. "His eyes lit up!" Agle recalls.

Declares Conrad, "Every astronaut has, is, or soon will be writing the same story about the same old stuff for the same old audience, but a comic book—that's different!"

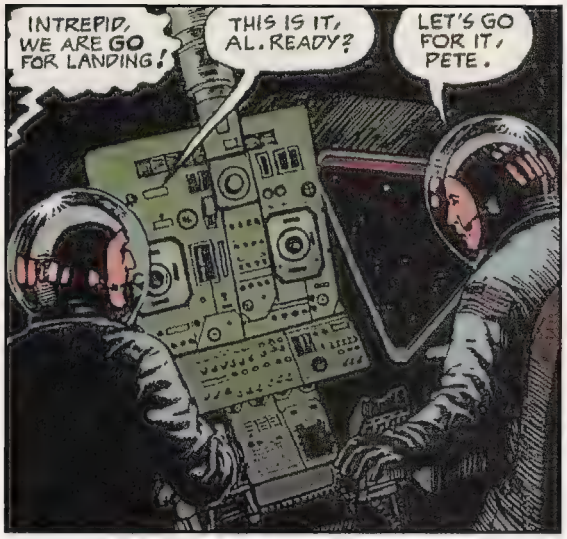
Conrad was told of the project's inability to attract a mainstream publisher. "I said I tried, and nobody would take it," says Agle, who had thought this meant the end of the project. What was the response of the third man to lunar walk, the first to bring country music into space, and admitted fan of Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, and Batman? "With that kind of attitude, we couldn't have gotten to the moon." The company rocketed from there.

Helping to create Pepper Pike Graphix wasn't a big stretch for Conrad. He has always been out there talking to people and promoting the space program. "Always, always, always," insists his wife, Nancy, who is the company's third co-founder, along with Agle.

WHY WASTE TIME READING ABOUT IMAGINARY SPACESHIPS THAT LAUNCH ALL TOO EASILY OUT OF CONVENIENT UNDERGROUND HANGARS, WHEN YOU CAN READ ABOUT THE REAL DEAL? *AND YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY LEARN SOMETHING!*



SUDDENLY, AT T-PLUS 36 AND 53 SECONDS, THE EXPLOSIVELY FUELED SATURN V ROCKET, IS STRUCK BY ***BOLTS OF LIGHTNING!***



"He's still working, and that's one of the best messages that he teaches. Don't look back; look forward."

"I don't sit around thinking about what I did," says Conrad, "I sit around thinking about what I'm going to do."

So who has Captain Pete reached thus far? Well, in Roger Stern's novel, *The Death and Life of Superman*, the world's biggest Boy Scout remembers an inspirational talk given to him by none other than Pete Conrad. Supes recalls hearing Conrad made him wish to fly off and explore space.

"I don't know where that came from," laughs Nancy, "but Pete has spent a lot of time talking to youngsters worldwide. He has inspired a lot of young people; it wouldn't surprise me if he could teach Superman a thing or two."

Batman was also big with the lunar crew: all three astronauts (Pete, Dick, and Al) had Corvettes. According to Nancy, "The *Batman* TV show was very popular then, and they used to zoom around and pretend their sports cars were Batmobiles." She laughs, "I think they all had fantasies about being Batman in space."

Nancy, however, was always a fan of other fictional heroes: Wonder Woman ("She was my kind of gal"), Superman ("He was a young girl's ideal, and he could save you from bad dudes"), Dick Tracy, Terry and the Pirates, and the Smurfs. "Comic books are such an exciting place to interact," asserts Nancy. "All your sensory perceptions are cooking when you read one."

Upcoming releases from Pepper Pike will be books about Apollo 13 (also to be the subject of a feature film), the Space Shuttle (shipping in February 1995), the Thunderbirds (the U.S. Air Force's Flight Demonstration Team), and the Blue Angels (the Navy's Flight Demonstration Team). The latter two will come out in the summer of 1995, the Department of Defense and Pentagon willing. "All the comics have the participation of the people who were really involved," Nancy declares. "The real superheroes."

A portion of the profits from Pepper Pike Graphix goes to the Mercury 7 Foundation, which, according to Agle, benefits "space education and scholarships, and provides things for people interested in the sciences."

"A hundred years from now, we are not going to be talking about athletes," predicts Agle. "We are going to be talking about Neil Armstrong, Alan Shepherd, and Pete Conrad. The people we look up to in our history are not the athletes; they are the explorers, the scientists, the innovators."

And if the comic isn't enough for you, keep an eye out for the "Captain Pete" patch, and the "Captain Pete" Poster. In addition, "We are talking about trading cards," says Nancy. "Pete and I are working on a project that is evolving into a feature film. We are also working on a video; it's 'edu-tainment.' It features 'Captain Pete' zooming around on roller blades. That's where we're headed. Whether or not we get involved in CD-ROM—well, it's not an *if*, it's a *when*.

"I decided clear back in my youth that you could do it all," Nancy says. "Wonder Woman taught me that." ☆

Ruth Morrison is a freelance writer based in New York.

AT TOP: CAPTAIN PETE TELLS IT LIKE IT IS, 'CAUSE HE WAS THERE! BELOW: CONRAD "BACK IN THE DAY," AND NOW (INSET).

MIKE GRELL'S CLASSIC SAGA...
THE WAY IT WAS *MEANT* TO BE!

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WITH SEAN AUNE

BATMAN RETURNS AGAIN

Hoping to continue the excellence of Kenner's *Batman: The Animated Series* line, the company has announced that there will be three new figures released in early 1995. Coming in January are Bola Trap Robin, complete with whirling battle blades, and the long-awaited Bane, with bodyslam arm action and a "venom" tube. The final figure soaring into stores is Glider Robin, which comes with a secret wing jet pack and firing claw, and should be out in stores in February. Other '95 releases include Rapid Attack Batman and Tornado Batman, both with funky contraptions included.

By the time you read this, *The Tick* figures, from the company of Bandai America, should be shipping to the stores. Based on the comic series by writer/artist Ben Edlund, which debuted in 1988, and was recently adapted into the Fox network's animated series, this toy line promises to be quite successful.

For those unfamiliar with the Tick, he is a seven-foot-tall escaped mental patient, who weighs in at around 400 pounds. The Tick often succeeds by luck rather than skill, but along with his sidekick Arthur, a bungling accountant in a moth suit, the two protect their home, simply named The City.

The first 10 figures you can expect to see will be three-inch figures of the Tick, Arthur, American Maid, the Human Bullet, Sewer Urchin, Chairface Chippendale, the Crusading Chameleon, El Seed, Dean, and Dyna-Mole.

In January, Bandai will be shipping 10 six-inch figures which will all come with action features. The six good guy figures are:

Bounding Tick—with springing legs to make him leap.

Fluttering Arthur—with button-activated, wing-flapping action.

Cape-Furling Die Fledermaus—who strikes a masterful pose.

Sewer Spray Sewer Urchin—who sprays water.

Projectile Human Bullet—who shoots off his gold bullet head.

Man-Eating Cow—who reveals the remains of his most recent meal...or is it just a case of "foot-in-mouth" disease?

The four bad guys to be on the lookout for are:

New Batman figures include: (left to right) Rapid Attack Batman, Bola Trap Robin, Bane, Tornado Batman, and Glider Robin.

BATMAN & RELATED CHARACTERS ™ & © DC COMICS. PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNER PRODUCTS.

Death Hug Dean—with hugging, crushing arms.

Exploding Dyna-Mole—whose head blows off to reveal his true gritty self.

Grasping El Seed—with moveable tendril "hands."

Dinosaur Neil—A green dinosaur with a human head, whose body doubles in size.

In the spring of 1995, Bandai will also be releasing six wind-ups, each with its own wacky action:

Hard Drivin' Tick—who rides in his "Tickmobile." When you wind him up, he uses his hands to accelerate the wheel action.

Wing Flutterin' Arthur—who flaps his wings as he rides his scooter.

Cannon Human Bullet—who pops out of his cannon after going a certain distance.

Submarine Sewer Urchin—who keeps a watchful eye out as he navigates his submarine.

Crop Dustin' El Seed—who rocks his crop duster from side to side.

Time Bomb Dyna-Mole—who carries out his explosive threat.

And the final piece of the *Tick* line, as it stands right now, is a 16-inch talking Tick figure. You can expect him to say such things as "Spoon," "I am the Tick," "Keen," "Naughty spawn, you face the Tick," "Oh, gross," and "Evil is afoot!" So, be on the lookout for all these sure-to-be-cool toys!

Guns Ablazin'

Back in October, Toys R' Us announced that it would be changing its corporate policy on carrying realistic-looking toy guns. This stems from children repainting the guns to make them look more realistic, as compared to the brightly colored plastic that they originally come in.

Toys R' Us was instrumental back in 1987 in getting the toy industry to start coloring the toys in bright colors in order to make it easier for police officers to distinguish them from real ones. Criminals got the idea, though, to paint the ends of their guns orange to resemble the toy ones, and children painted their fake ones to look more realistic.

Now Toys R' Us Chief Executive Officer Michael Goldstein has announced that his company has stopped purchasing all realistic-looking guns that could be altered. These items include western-style rifles and guns, plastic handguns, and other guns that can be modified.

Goldstein was quoted in a recent press release as saying, "The issue is the potential harm that these products pose to children and others. We believe that by taking this step, we can help raise awareness and encourage manufacturers and other retailers to join us in the effort."

What consequences this decision will have on comic book-related toys is not apparent right now, but it shouldn't have too much impact. After all, it's not too easy to alter a *Star Trek* phaser to look like a modern, realistic gun.

BACKGROUND ART ™ & © ECLIPSE.

The Good Doers from the hit TV cartoon show *The Tick* (left to right): Sewer Spray Sewer Urchin, Projectile Human Bullet, Fluttering Arthur, Bounding Tick, Man-Eating Cow and Cape-Furling Die Fledermaus.

***The Tick*'s Evil Doers (left to right): Grasping El Seed, Death Hug Dean, Exploding Dyna-Mole, and Growing Dinosaur Neil.**

They also come in Wacky Wind-ups, too! From left: Time Bomb Dyna-Mole, Cannon Human Bullet, Hard Drivin' Tick, Wing Flutterin' Arthur, Submarine Sewer Urchin, and Crop Dustin' El Seed.

THE TICK AND RELATED CHARACTERS ™ & © BEN EDLUND. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANDAI AMERICA INC.

Etc.

Rumors abound that Hasbro will be putting out Mortal Kombat figures, based on the popular (and highly bloody) arcade game. The line will tentatively consist of eight characters, complete with firing weapons, realistic martial arts accessories, and cool "ninja action" moves, as well as secret game tips. There should also be several vehicles, including a cycle with Kano figure, MK-1 Battle Boat with Reptile figure, and the Dragon Wing Sailing ship with a Shang Tsung figure. Final reports show 12 inch fully poseable action figures, complete with weapons and temporary tattoos. More details and confirmations to come.

Some rumors that can finally be confirmed, however, include the one that Playmates will have a *Star Trek: Voyager* line ready to ship very close to the premiere of the television series.

Zen, The Intergalactic Ninja should have a movie coming out around December of 1995. While Just Toys, manufacturers of the *Star Wars* bendies, has had the license in the past for this property, it has not been announced yet if the company has the license for the new movie.

James Bond 007 will be returning in December 1995 with a new movie entitled *Goldeneye*. LCI, the company that has the power to sell the rights to the famous secret agent, is presently looking for a toy company to launch a new toy line based on the movie. More on this as it develops.

Rumors have floated around for years that a major toy company has had the rights to Judge Dredd. Will this toy line finally materialize along with the new Sylvester Stallone movie set to come out in summer 1995? Let's see what shows up at Toy Fair '95.

Another Burning Question

A question that seems to pop up a lot in the Toying Around mailbag is: If you find an action figure mispackaged, is it worth more? Tough question, but first let's cover some of the more common packaging mistakes.

Probably the number one problem in packaging is a figure ending up on the wrong card—like an X-Men figure ending up in a Spider-Man package, or vice versa. You can also end up with figures packed upside down, sideways, or any which way. Whenever mistakes like this happen, they are called "fidos." Where this word came from is a mystery, but it is a commonly accepted term.

Very rarely does this type of error increase the value of the particular figures, but there are some people who like to collect this sort of item. These mistakes are bound to happen in any toy line, and it can be fun hunting them down, if you wish to keep your eye out for them.

Do you have a question that you feel could be answered in these pages? Then send it to: Toying Around, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, N.Y. 10920-2064.

Please note, though, that Homemade Heroes pictures should be sent to "Homemade Heroes, c/o Wizard Press" and NOT to "Toying Around."

That's it for this month. Be here next month as we begin our pre-Toy Fair warm-up! Until then...see you in aisle 7C.

Sean Aune is a freelance writer and owner of Splash Page Comics and Toys, a store in Kirksville, Mo.

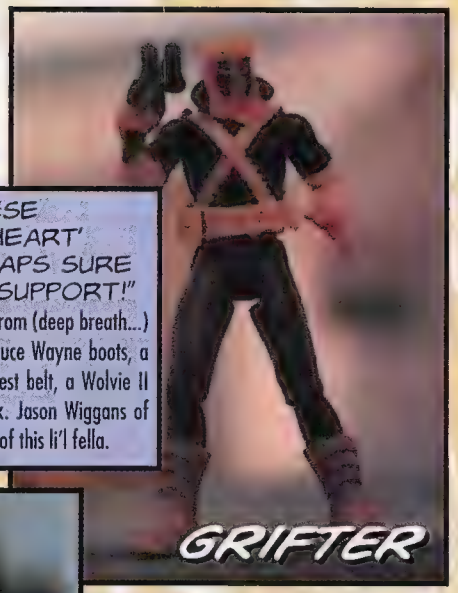
HOMEMADE HEROES

For taking a bunch of run-of-the-mill toys and crafting such spectacular homemade versions of their favorite characters, everyone whose figure sees print this month wins a two-character set of Toy Biz's Steel Mutants X-Men figures, a copy of *Hulk* #418 signed by Peter David, and a copy of *The Ray* (ongoing series) #1 signed by Joe Quesada. The Second Prize winners win all of that neat stuff plus a set of the 10-inch Toy Biz Wolverine, Sabretooth, and Cyclops figures, and a copy of *The Kindred* #1 signed by Brandon Choi. The Grand Prize winner wins all'a that stuff *plus* a limited edition, hand-painted Savage Dragon statue by Clayburn Moore. Congrats to all!

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

POLARIS

"GEE, MATH CLASS IS HARD."
Polaris, here, was made from some female He-Man-type figure from Mattel. Eva Burgess of Louisa, Ky. did the honors on this one.



GRIFTER

"BOY, THESE 'CROSS MY HEART' BANDOLIER STRAPS SURE GIVE ME EXTRA SUPPORT!"
This WildC.A.T.s guy was made from (deep breath...) a Gambit body, Dark Knight Bruce Wayne boots, a Ninja Turtle belt, a Cable III chest belt, a Wolvie II gun, and a T-shirt for the mask. Jason Wiggans of Winchester, Ind. made the most of this li'l fella.

"THANKS!"
SPECIAL SHOUT-OUT TO ERIK LARSEN AND CLAYTON MOORE FOR THE DRAGON STATUE!

ADAM WARLOCK

"...MADE FOR A WOMAN," MY ASS! MY PITS FEEL LIKE I SHAVED 'EM WITH A CHEESE GRATER!"
Marshall Brooks of Detroit, Mich. cranked out Warlock here from a Banshee figure, Stryfe's cape, and a Mattel He-Man figure belt. It's too good a rendition for a poor slob who gave up the Infinity Gauntlet.

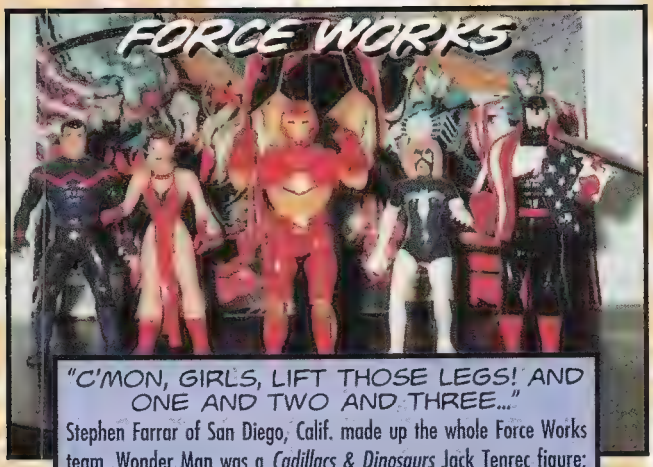
DR. MIRAGE

"I AM *TOO* A REAL SUPERHERO!"
Tim Webster of Cedar Springs, Mich. made Doc Mirage from a Gambit body (boy, that Cajun sure is popular), Dark Knight Bruce Wayne boots, and a custom-made jacket.

"I'M NOT JUST THE PRESIDENT, I'M ALSO A CLIENT."
This Gen[13] guy, Grunge, was made from a mysterious *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* figure by David Acuna of Lennox, Calif.

GRUNGE

Polaris & Adam Warlock ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Grifter & Grunge ™ & © Aegis Ent. DBA WildStorm Productions. Dr. Mirage ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.



"C'MON, GIRLS, LIFT THOSE LEGS! AND ONE AND TWO AND THREE..."

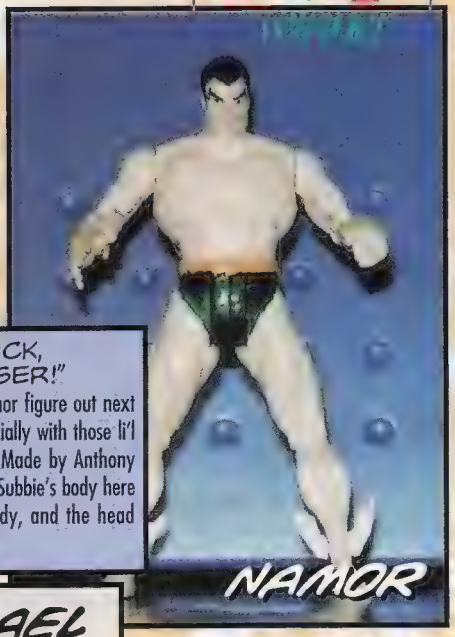
Stephen Farrar of San Diego, Calif. made up the whole Force Works team. Wonder Man was a *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* Jack Tenrec figure; Scarlet Witch was a *C & D* Hannah Dundee figure; Iron Man was, well, a Toy Biz Iron Man; Spider-Woman was a Kenner Catwoman, and USAgent was a Toy Biz Cap. Great job, Stephen!

SECOND PRIZE winner

"SO C'MON DOWN TO BLOODSHOT'S USED CAR LOT ON I-95. JUST FOLLOW THE CHROMIUM BILLBOARDS!"

This kickass rendition of Bloodshot comes our way from Chris Miller of Fullerton, Calif. Chris made 'im from a Toy Biz Colossus figure (glad *someone* could find good use outta that thing), and a Hasbro C.O.P.S. rifle.

SECOND PRIZE winner



"QUICK, QUICK, PULL MY FINGER!"

Ah, so what if there'll be a Namor figure out next year? This guy looks cool (especially with those li'l wingie thingies on his ankles). Made by Anthony Ordinario of Santa Clara, Calif., Subbie's body here was originally a Weapon X body, and the head belongs to Kane II.

THIRD PRIZE winner

"OK, BACK HER UP A LITTLE MORE, AAAND...STOP. UH, STOP! HEY, STARRRGH****!"

Azrael here was crafted by Paul Collins of Tustin, Calif., and was made from a Wolverine II body, a felt cloak, and sandwich bag twistie-ties for the flame effects. Way to go, Paul!

hey!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send your photo entries to:

Homemade Heroes
c/o Toying Around
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And hey, no Polaroids, take close-up, full-figure shots, and make sure you focus, dammit!

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CONTEST

I am:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) DATE OF BIRTH

HOME ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE (DON'T FORGET YOUR AREA CODE)

Ye Itty Bitty Legal Crap

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, TSR, their immediate families, and alla them no-good Drow scumbags (except Drizzt—he's a nice Drow). Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, and your telephone number with area code on the official entry form, a three-by-five-inch index card, or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to First Quest Contest, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. How bad must Hobbit feet smell? All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1995. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on April 3, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after April 21, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to First Quest Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

FIRST QUEST ™ & © TSR INC.

"Wow, that's where you don't know what's really going on
your dad's drawing your favorite video game incredibly fresh because now you're feeling everything the second you put it on plug it in crank it up.
interactor
interactors there jumping away at
breakfast was and your lunch is and now the

"RAMPAGE"

KEVIN VANHOOK

SEAN CHEN

DICK GIORDANO

JESSE "HURRICANE" BERDINKA

TOMMY LEE EDWARDS

JANUARY 1995

BLOODSHOT™ #27

SECRET WEAPONS™ #20

BLOODSHOT™ #28

SECRET WEAPONS™ #21

BLOODSHOT™ #29

VALIANT.

THE ULTIMATE KILLING MACHINE

ACTIVATED

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BADG

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SHI

TEMPEST

IRLS

KA POW SPLAT! THWIP! BLAM!!!
FOOM! THOOM! SNIKT SPLASH

WE SPEAK
THE LANGUAGE!

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2nd Prize- *Captain America Marvel Masterworks* signed by Stan Lee, a subscription to *Captain America*, plus your choice of 3 subscriptions to any Marvel Comics.

3rd Prize- *Captain America Marvel Masterworks* signed by Stan Lee!

And if you know Cap, it's a snap! Just fill out the entire coupon including all questions and vital info, stuff it in an envelope and send to:

Captain America Contest
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

All entries must be postmarked by February 7th, 1995.

PART OF MARVEL'S CAPTAIN AMERICA MONTH CELEBRATION!

OFFICIAL CAPTAIN AMERICA CONTEST COUPON

1: Name the top secret project which transformed Steve Rogers into Captain America.

_____

2: Which World War II villain continues to be Captain America's greatest enemy today?

_____

3: Where did Captain America go after Bucky's death near the end of World War II and before he went into suspended animation in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic?

_____

4: What current super hero was appointed by the Commission to replace Rogers as Captain America after he had resigned?

_____

5: Name the real identity of the hero from question #4.

_____

6: What team is Captain America currently affiliated with?

_____

7: Which two heroes are attempting to pull Captain America out of the coma he is currently in?

_____

I am: (Please print clearly)

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (Don't Forget Your Area Code) _____

All entries must be received by Feb. 7th, 1995. Limit one entry per envelope. No purchase necessary. Print your name, address, city, state, zip code and your telephone number with area code on the official entry form, or a 3 x 5 index card with the quiz answers. Contest open to US residents only, except employees of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP and WIZARD PRESS, any affiliated companies promotional and advertising agencies and their families are not eligible. All entrants grant to the sponsors permission to use their name and likeness in advertising and promotion for the contest. Winners will be drawn on or about Feb. 15th, 1995 and will be notified by telephone and/or mail. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prize will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited by law. MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP and WIZARD PRESS are not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners List available by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to "Winners List - Captain America Contest", c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. Winners shall be responsible for all applicable taxes. Void where prohibited by law. Contest sponsored by MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. and WIZARD PRESS.

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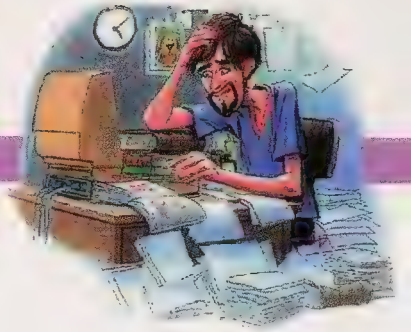
PALMER'S PICKS



A Comic Book Cocktail

It's safe to say that *Very Vicky* is unlike anything being done in comics today. While the typical comic book is described by the other comics it resembles, *Very Vicky* can best be explained as equal parts '50s screwball comedy movie, scathing satire of trendy teens, and celebration of the wonders of "responsible" drinking, with a small homage to the eternal coolness of Frank Sinatra thrown in for good measure.

Vicky Ocean, the sixteen-year-old star of *Very Vicky*, is a hip New York girl who goes to live with her aunt and uncle in Sandy Shores, Georgia, a small beach town that claims to be "The 'Buckle' in the 'Sun Belt.'" She's a bit out of place with the other beer-drinking, uncultured teens, but she manages to bring her own sensibilities to the rest of the small beach community in a unique fashion. In the short span of a handful of comic books, she's thrown the beach party to end all beach parties, with a guest list including Babblin' Louie Hubbard, God, and the Devil; been in the middle of a feud between the Shriner Lodge and the Jellyfish Lodge; and gone on a madcap chase for a pot of gold a la the classic movie *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*.

The bizarre situations in *Very Vicky* spring from the imaginations of writer John Mitchell and artist Jana Christy, a husband and wife self-publishing team. They split the creative chores on the book equally, but their collaboration tends to be a little closer than normal. As John explains, "I basically write a movie script. I'm the script writer and Jana's the director." He feels that working on *Very Vicky* with Jana is easy because "we tend to be the type of people who finish each other's sentences. It's easy because I don't have to tell her things she already knows."

Jana reinforces John's enthusiasm for the comic and their method. "I can't imagine working with anyone else. It's so hard for an artist to understand what the writer is trying to do, but with John it's much easier because it's such a group project. We talk about Vicky all the time, so we're really in on all the ideas together, and that really helps."

The title character was a direct output of this close collaboration, as John explains. "She sprang out of our minds. I came up with the name first before anything else, and the first time Jana drew her, she looked pretty much like she does now, except she wore boots." Boots or no boots, Vicky is definitely a recognizable character, with her distinctive, (mostly) black wardrobe and wry smile.

Most of the situations Vicky finds herself in are inspired by some of John and Jana's favorite things, including screwball comedies and Sinatra movies. In fact, the music industry's Chairman of the Board was the inspiration for the name of their self-publishing company, Meet Danny Ocean. "It's a double Sinatra reference. He made a movie, *Meet Danny Wilson*, and Danny Ocean was his character in the legendary film *Ocean Eleven*."

John reveals that their appreciation of Sinatra goes even further. "In the comic book, Vicky is supposed to be Danny Ocean's daughter."

Very Vicky reads like a movie, if such a thing is possible, because John believes that "comics are mainly a visual medium. A lot of people don't take advantage of it. I always get irritated when there's a little too much narration where it isn't needed. Sometimes it works, but you don't need a narrator to tell you there's a fight going on. I also don't like a lot of thought balloons. I prefer Jana's drawing to express what's going on."

Jana's artwork does a perfect job of conveying the madcap goings-on in *Very Vicky*. At first glance, her drawings seem simple, but there's more than just what lies on the surface. Upon subsequent readings, background jokes and details become apparent. Her artwork is so fresh because she cannot cite a comic book influence on her work.

With nothing more than biting, sarcastic writing, and eye-pleasing artwork, *Very Vicky* goes down like a smooth martini.

A section of the cover of *Very Vicky* #1.

By Tom Palmer Jr.

Above: Vicky does the Jackie Kennedy look. Top right: Floating Scotch on the rocks.

"If I'd have to name any influences," she says, "it would probably be children's books illustrators, like Ludwig Bemelmans, who did *Madeline*, and Ernest Shepherd, who did the *Winnie the Pooh* books."

In fact, before they started working on *Very Vicky*, Jana and John tried, unsuccessfully, to break into children's books. Obviously, that genre's loss is comic books' gain. *Very Vicky* is the talk of the industry, but John is a little wary of the attention that *Very Vicky*, and small press comics in general, have been getting recently.

"Look at punk rock," he says. "It sort of lumbered around for God knows how long. Most people didn't even know it still existed, but it took one small, marginally-talented band to be hyped, and suddenly it becomes pop music. But with comics, [the hype] will only get to a certain point. They still have a stigma they haven't gotten rid of. I think comics are misconstrued as too lowbrow for people who just read books, and too esoteric for people who just like watching TV. It's such an overlooked, in-between medium."

Very Vicky has been so well-received due to the fact that John and Jana keep it simple. With nothing more than biting, sarcastic writing, and eye-pleasing artwork, *Very Vicky* goes down like a smooth martini. And the best thing about it is that you won't get a hangover in the morning.

As always, please send any comments to me at Palmer's Picks, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064, and send any unusual cocktail recipes to John and Jana at the Meet Danny Ocean address below. ☆

PICK OF THE MONTH

***Drawn & Quarterly*—**This high-class anthology is one of the few publications that actually cares about and respects comics as an art form. With its lavish production values and commitment to publishing the finest work from North American and European cartoonists, *Drawn & Quarterly* gives comics the attention they deserve. Pick up the second issue, which is out now, at your local comic store, or send $5.95 directly to Drawn & Quarterly Publications, 5550 Jeanne Mance, #16, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4K6.

Tom Palmer Jr. is a freelance writer who is too young to order an Old Fashioned, and too old to order a Shirley Temple.

John and Jana's Recommended Reading: The fine folks at Meet Danny Ocean recommend these comics for your reading pleasure. So, sit back with a cocktail and enjoy.

Acme Novelty Library by Chris Ware from Fantagraphics Books; *Wolf and Byrd* by Batton Lash from Exhibit A Press; *Rare Bit Fiends* by Rick Veitch from King Hell Press; *Tyrant* by Steve Bissette from SpiderBaby Grafix & Publications; *Milk and Cheese* and *Dick Wad* by Evan Dorkin from Slave Labor Graphics; and *Fat Man the Human Flying Saucer* by the late, legendary C.C. Beck. As for *Fat Man*, John pleads, "Whoever owns the rights to this, please contact us!"

Tom's Recommended Reading

***Very Vicky*:** *Very Vicky* is a black-and-white comic published on a quarterly schedule, and the sixth issue is in stores now. The first issue, published by Iconografix, is sold out, but Meet Danny Ocean recently published a second printing. Every issue contains a main story by John and Jana, and a series of back-up features, including multimedia collage strips by Gregory Damien Grinnell. All six issues can be ordered for $2.50 each from Meet Danny Ocean, PO Box 383286, Cambridge, MA 02238 (include $1 postage with your order). Make sure to check with your local comic shop before ordering.

The Very Vicky Happy Hour Collection: This is not a trade paperback, but a collection of the first five issues of *Very Vicky*, with a full-color, signed pin-up. If your local comic store is serviced by Diamond, Capital City, or Heroes World, then you can get your sweaty little hands on this collection.

Miscellaneous: *Very Vicky* has popped up in a few odd places recently. An original *Very Vicky* preview was published in *Cerebus* #187, and *GASP (Giant Anthology of Self-Publishers)* contains an all-new *Very Vicky* short story, as well as work from fifteen other self-publishers. All-new *Very Vicky* cartoon strips are also published in the quarterly Boston arts paper *Etcetera*.

The Very Vicky Junior Hepcat Squad: You can join the ranks of the Junior Hepcat Squad (along with well-known creators Steve Bissette and Dave Sim) for the small fee of $2.50 (sent to Meet Danny Ocean at the above address). When you join, you get a membership card, games, a newsletter, and drinking tips.

VICKY OCEAN, *VERY VICKY*™ & © JOHN MITCHELL AND JANA CHRISTY

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

CBIQ

Saddle up, pilgrims, it's time once again to rope some doggies and get knee-deep in comic book trivia! What follows are 25 of the hardest questions ever slapped together by a band of fanboy desperados.

This time around, we're grading you against the most memorable/unnerving scenes outta the flick *Pulp Fiction* (and consider yourself lame if you haven't seen it yet!). The higher the score, the more affecting the scene.

score	rank
0-5	The adrenaline shot (ouch).
6-12	Marcellus saying, "I'm gonna get medieval on yo' ass!
13-19	Vincent turning to talk to Marvin in the back seat.
20-24	The gimp.
25	The gimp, pointing and giggling.

---

1. The mutant dubbed "Mutant X" was really:
A) Cyclops.
B) The Mimic.
C) Proteus.
D) Wolverine.

2. Which babe was never Captain America's main squeeze?
A) Bernie Rosenthal
B) Natasha Romanov
C) Sharon Carter
D) Rachel Leighton

3. Who first suggested that the Avengers form a team?
A) Ant Man and the Wasp
B) Thor
C) Iron Man
D) Hulk

4. Rogue made her first comic book appearance in what issue?
A) *Uncanny X-Men* #171
B) *X-Men Annual* #10
C) *Avengers Annual* #10
D) *Alf* #7

5. Harley Quinn's real name is:
A) Harley Davidson.
B) Harleen Quinzel.
C) Harley Quinzen.
D) Harleen Quentin.

6. The Black Cat got her "bad luck" powers from:
A) Her parents. She's a mutie freak, and was born with 'em.
B) The Power Broker.
C) The Kingpin.
D) The High Evolutionary.

7. Who won the most recent Great Cow Race in *Bone* #10?
A) Phoney Bone and Smiley Bone
B) Jeff Smith
C) Gran'ma Ben
D) A chocolate cow, in a chocolate field, by a chocolate stream...

8. Matt Murdock was killed by:
A) Silver Sable.
B) Matt Murdock (A suicidal superhero? Yeah, great role model!).
C) Erynys.
D) Siege.

9. Who killed Bruce Wayne's parents?
A) Alfred Pennyworth
B) Joe Chill
C) Joe Cool
D) Nobody knows! Thanks to *Zero Hour*, even Bruce is clueless.

10. Who was the mysterious figure that visited Wally West (Flash) in his childhood, convincing him to go on to greatness?
A) Barry Allen
B) Iris Allen
C) Wally West (Yeah, like DC would ever do anything like that.)
D) Professor Zoom

11. Pitt never guest-starred in which Image book?
A) *Spawn*
B) *The Maxx*
C) *Gen*^{13}
D) *Badrock and Company*

12. Sam, from Steve Purcell's Sam and Max, is a:
A) Talking fish with three eyeballs.
B) Sharply dressed dog with some snappy banter.
C) Funny little bunny rabbit with a fetish for strong violence.
D) Bigger and better groundhog.

BACKGROUND ™ & © THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS

13. Who did not attend Rick and Marlo's wedding?
A) Northstar
B) The Living Laser
C) Reed Richards
D) Mr. Hyde

14. Which woman did not give birth in 1994?
A) Jasmine
B) Karen Starr
C) Leeja
D) Lyja

15. Who watches the Watchmen?
A) Night Owl
B) Rorschach
C) Alan Moore
D) Nobody. *Watchmen* was a well-written, realisticaly drawn, thought-provoking comic book series, so none of today's fans would watch it.

16. The words scrawled on walls by Wonder Woman during her recent mad frenzy against the mob were:
A) No Freedom No Pity.
B) No Quarter No Sanctuary.
C) No Escape No Mercy.
D) Please Buy My Book.

17. Captain Marvel's powers are not based on:
A) Solomon.
B) Mercury.
C) Hermes.
D) Atlas.

18. Moonstalker imprisoned Zorro in:
A) A rotten, stinkin' jail cell.
B) A pit dug thirty feet down.
C) The decaying corpse of a whale.
D) DC's continuity. That way, no one would ever find him.

19. Who inspired Rogue Prime's scar?
A) Firearm
B) Mantra
C) Warstrike
D) Jonah Hex

20. Which of the following titles came first?
A) *Justice League Europe*
B) *Justice League America*
C) *Justice League International*
D) *Just a League of Losers*

21. Which supervillain group has never given the X-Men a hard time?
A) The Ani-Men
B) Factor Three
C) The Marauders
D) The Masters of Evil

22. The Geomancer who tortured and blinded Gilad in 326 B.C. is:
A) Lord Ahashuarius.
B) Lord Hephaestion.
C) Lord Hephastopholies.
D) Lord Hepatitis.

23. In *Star Wars*, who did Darth Vader choke using the Force?
A) Captain Antilles
B) Admiral Motti
C) Admiral Ackbar
D) Captain Kirk. Well, he tried, anyway, but Kirk gave him one of those cool flying dropkicks, then a karate chop, scored with Mrs. Vader, and gave Peter Cushing a kidney punch. And that was that.

24. Which of the following freaks is not from Krypton?
A) Superman
B) Doomsday
C) Supergirl
D) The Eradicator

25. Arthur, the Tick's sidekick, is supposed to be:
A) A bunny.
B) A moth.
C) A flying wombat.
D) Used as bait every issue, just like all good sidekicks are. ☆

stupid but TRUE...

Way back in *Fantastic Four* #5, Dr. Doom jumped onto the comic book scene and sent the Thing, Mr. Fantastic, and the Human Torch back in time to steal Blackbeard's treasure chest (he kept Sue behind as insurance). Sure, if I had a time machine, the first thing I'd do is go after some old pirate treasure. Anyway, back in ancient history, Ben disguised himself as a pirate, so that he wouldn't be too noticeable. Yeah, like a huge, freakin', rock-like, orange creature with an eye patch and a beard is inconspicuous. Anyway, Thingbeard here ended up playing out the very role of Blackbeard, while muttering such things as "Ahoy, Matey! Let's see if we can date one of these pretty barmaids!" Ahoy, Thingie! You're a big, dumb freak! Anyway, through his actions, Thingbeard actually ends up starting the very legend of Blackbeard himself.

To add to the pure ludicrousness of this story, Reed Richards empties Blackbeard's treasure chest and fills it with chains, before returning to his regular time. See, that way he kept his promise with Doom, and brought back Blackbeard's treasure *chest*. Doomy's really gotta learn to read the fine print. Thankfully, by story's end, the Thing gave up the Blackbeard mantle and returned to his own time. Talk about your seasick tale.

ANSWERS

1.C 2.B 3.A 4.C 5.B 6.C 7.C 8.B 9.B
10.C 11.A 12.B 13.C 14.A 15.D 16.B 17.C
18.C 19.A 20.C 21.D 22.B 23.A 24.C 25.B

the WIZARD OF CARDS

By Stephen Shamus

We now have the final scoop on the '95 Flair Marvel Annual cards from Fleer, coming to a store near you at the beginning of February. The $4-a-pack price returns, as does the "box" packaging of each 10-pack of cards. This 150-card set covers all the major happenings of the Marvel Universe from this past year. And for

'95 Fleer Flair Marvel

you chase card lovers, there will be at least one chase card per pack, with the total number of chase cards reaching a whopping 51. Here's a rundown of all the chase cards:

12 HoloBlast Cards (One in every three packs)—These are 3-D holograms featuring the top battles in the Marvel Universe, including Spider-Man vs. Scarlet Spider and Cable vs. Nimrod.

12 Chromium Cards (One in every two packs)—Using the ever-popular chromium technology, this set contains the top names in Marvel's stable of characters, including the likes of Iron Man (ooooh) and the Hulk.

24 Power Blast Etched-Foil Cards (One in every pack)—These are etched-foil, as the title states, and contain many of Marvel's top characters (fortunately, no Iron Man).

3 Duo-Blast Cards (One in every six packs)—Each of these etched-foil double-sided cards features a character on the front and his possible substitute in crime-fighting on the back. These cards feature Spider-Man and Scarlet Spider, Punisher 2099 and Vendetta, and Iron Man and War Machine.

Speaking of Fleer and Marvel, in all December-shipping X-Men titles, readers will receive a two-pack of cards that includes a card from the '95 Ultra X-Men series and a Skeleton Warriors promo card. Those two come in one pack, while the other pack contains a sweepstakes card with a chance to win X-Men arcade games, autographed hardcover editions of Chris Claremont's *The Best of the X-Men*, and boxes of '95 Fleer Ultra X-Men. The contest, entitled "Luck of the Drawn," will also have a chase card program. Every eighth pack will contain an exclusive Weapon X/Wolverine card that is available only through this offer. The following is a list of titles that the two-packs will appear in:

Cable Deluxe #20, *X-Factor* Deluxe #111, *Wolverine* Deluxe #90, *Uncanny X-Men* Deluxe #321, *Excalibur* Deluxe #86, *X-Men* Deluxe #41, *Generation X* Deluxe #4, *X-Force* Deluxe #43, and *X-Men: Year of the Mutants Collector's Preview*.

For all you cookie lovers out there, Marvel has put out a total of 5.3 million cards (*not* produced by Fleer) into packages of Cookie-Crisp™ cereal. There are 12 cards in the set based on the new *Spider-Man* animated series. Six of the cards are available in boxes of Cookie-Crisp™, while the other six are only available through an offer for $1.25 plus two proofs of purchase. The cards don't look as good as the standard Marvel cards coming out of Fleer these days, but if you're a serious collector who wants every Marvel card out there, here's some more cards you need to get. By the way, *Spider-Man* should begin airing as a regular animated series sometime in February, although the Cookie-Crisp™ promotion was running through September, October, and November of '94. Go figure.

Topps is releasing a comprehensive look at the Image Universe in January of 1995. The Topps Finest Image Universe set contains characters from the original six Image founders. According to Kevin Fitzpatrick of Topps, "This set was two years in the making." There are 90 cards in the set, with each artist having 15 cards of his characters represented. Let's run through all the artists and find out what they're doing for this set:

Erik Larsen—He has drawn several new pieces for this set—including some depictions of Savage Dragon—with the rest of the artwork being pick-up art from the comics, although it is recolored.

Jim Lee—He has personally done some new cards for the set—his WildC.A.T.s will be among the characters featured—as has artist Dan Norton. The rest will be pick-ups of only stuff drawn by Jim.

Rob Liefeld—Rob has done a few new pieces himself, with the rest of the artwork coming from different Extreme Studios artists. This subset is all original work.

Todd McFarlane—Unfortunately, none of the McFarlane stuff is original, although it will be his best stuff picked up from the *Spawn* books.

Marc Silvestri—Marc has done some new pieces. A few originals are coming from his studio, while the rest are pick-ups from *Cyberforce*.

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They're back! The '95 Fleer Flair cards are coming in February.

Jim Valentino—Jim has drawn some new pieces, while the rest is pick-up material. He does debut some new characters in his subset, including the Silver Age ShadowHawk, Integriti, and Ace the Kid from Outer Space and the Galactic Legion.

There will be three levels of chase cards in the set, including six Character Creator Cards. These cards each feature a photo of the artist on the front, with his characters drawn in to create a scene. For instance, the Liefeld card shows a picture of Rob sitting on the shoulders of Badrock. These cards come one in seven packs. Another six cards, called Debut Cards, have a picture of the first cover of each of the founder's books on the card fronts, with a brief synopsis of the books on the backs. These also come one in seven packs. Lastly, six clear-chrome cards (which are transparent chromium cards) come one in 11 packs and all feature original pieces by the creators, except for McFarlane's Spawn. Six-card packs will cost you $2.99 each, with only 24 packs coming to a display box. So, it will run you about $70 for a full box. Although that's kind of steep, this is the first set to contain all the original Image founders.

Star Trek: The Episode Collection Season 2 is on the way from SkyBox in January. The set, based on the popular *Next Generation* TV series, sports an odd 96 cards, and includes three cards from each of the 22 episodes. Packs contain eight cards, and will sell for $1.29 each. Six foil-embossed cards will probably come packed at a ratio of 1:12, with two animated (highly detailed and in-depth) holograms coming packed at a ratio of one in 36, featuring Troi and Riker. The numbering of the regular set and the embossed cards will probably continue from the first series, but that is yet to be determined.

Watch next month for full details on SkyBox's newest card release, featuring the prime-time TV series *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*.

Comic Images has two sets slated for a January release—The Best of Boris All-Chromium and Prince Valiant. For Boris, you have a 90-card set with a plethora of insert cards, including: six OmniChrome cards found three per box; one of 500 Boris signed cards; one serially numbered Medallion Card (this is a regular card, distinct in the fact that it says Medallion Card on the back); one uncut six-card strip of artwork not found in the regular set (found one per case); and a three-card chase set entitled "Triadmiration," found one card per box. The seven-card packs will sell for around $2.00 per pack.

The Prince Valiant cards feature Hal Foster's old comic strip art as well as many new pieces from the new Marvel comic series. Randomly inserted at three per box is a six-card chromium set. There's also a three-card, rare art chase set and a 24 kt. gold signature card of Prince Valiant featuring a facsimile signature of Hal Foster. Ten-card packs have a suggested retail of around 99 cents each.

Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers were one of the biggest success stories of 1993, and on into 1994. Collect-A-Card is now releasing its third Power Rangers series, entitled *The New Season*. This 72-card set is due out in mid-November. This time, the new, evil White Ranger is making his first appearance on cardboard. There is a 72-card, dyna-etched Power Foil parallel set (a dyna-etched version of the regular set), found one per pack; eight Characters plastic cards (one per 18 packs; hobby-only); and eight foil-stamped White Ranger cards (one per eight packs; retail-only). Eight-card packs will set you back $1.25 each.

Wizards of the Coast has released its newest expansion game to *Magic: The Gathering*, entitled *Fallen Empires*. All told, Wizards of the Coast is producing over 240 million cards for the *Magic* set and all of its expansions, which was the total orders the company received. This new 102-card set actually has 187 cards, if you take into account the 85-card variations which contain different pieces of artwork. This set is another biggie for Wizards of the Coast.

By next month we should be able to tell you who got the license to do the movie cards for the biggest flick of '95, *Batman Forever*. It's going to be an interesting surprise.

Fleer is producing a very affordable line of Holiday Easter cards for March release in '95. There's a story in every seven-card pack, featuring classics like "Peter Cottontail's Surprise" and "The Ugly Duckling." Packs come with and without stickers, at a suggested retail of 79 cents and 50 cents, respectively.

SkyBox will be producing cards for the next two Disney productions, *Pocahontas* and *Gargoyles*. Also, look for two SkyBox sets in '95 from Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios. The first Liefeld set should be a lower-line set in the 99-cent to $1.09 range, while the second set will be a super-premium brand line containing all-original art by Stephen Platt, which should run in the $2-$3 range.

Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers will join the elite gaming group shortly. The popular kids TV show will become a card game, but you'll have to wait until next month to find out who's doing it. Till then, good luck with your collecting!

Stephen Shamus is the 20-year-old co-publisher of Collector's Sportslook, *which makes it really hard to believe he still lives at home.*

™ & © King Features

Comic Images presents, the Prince Valiant card set in January.

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Topps will be releasing a card set devoted to the Image universe in January '95.

collector's

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BAD TO THE BONE! JANUARY, 1995

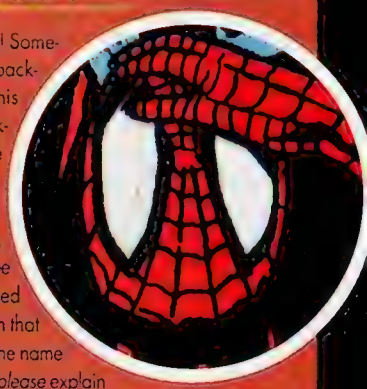
TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay any attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1. SPAWN

Yowza! I bet you're wishin' you wore that cup now, eh, Spawn? Superheroing is tough business. We're talkin' Soprano City here, folks! Anyway, we probably don't have to tell you why this guy is here in the number one spot yet again, but for that poor schnook in Sturgeon Bay, Wis. who's never even heard of Spawn, we'll give you the lowdown. Ya see, there's this really neat artist guy—we'll call him Todd McFarlane (since that's what his mom calls him)—and he created this megapowerful superhero called Spawn. And, thanks to McFarlane's popularity, a new Spawn toy line (which includes that cool freakin' Clown figure that you can't find anywhere!), and talks of a movie/cartoon in the works, Spawn has become one of the kiddies' most favorite characters, period. How can Todd make him more popular? One word: X-belt-buckle.

2. SPIDER-MAN



Oh, my god! Medic! Medic!! Somebody put Spidey's head on backwards! Oh, wait, it's only his storylines that are all backwards; his head's on just fine (relatively speaking). You gotta have some sympathy for the sap, though—after all, his clone is running around free in the city, wearing a hooded sweatshirt (somebody explain that costume to us), and going by the name the Scarlet Spider (somebody *please* explain that *name* to us). Plus, thanks to Mary Jane's completely unexpected announcement (now she's a swinger, dating a singer?), Petey'll hopefully be seeing a bouncing little arachnid or two in about nine months. On top of that, Aunt May is rumored to be on her deathbed (for real this time), and it turns out that the Venom symbiote gave Spidey a raging case of syphilis (that last one's a lie, but it sure would make the papers, though, eh?).

3. WOLVERINE

With a stiff upper lip, Wolver...wait a minute, Wolvie doesn't even have an upper lip. All right, then, with a stiff lower lip, Wolverine looks ready to kick some serious mutant-hatin' butt! The bestest, smartest, and surely smelliest X-Man around is just basking in his fame. Could this newly resurrected popularity be due to the fact that his own title is nearing the centennial mark? Or maybe fans are just jumpin' for joy 'cause he'll be back to the ol' Logan pretty soon (along with some spiffy metal claws and a studded cone bra). It might also have something to do with the fact that he is rumored to play a major role in the X-Men timeflip universe that will be a result of Legion's actions in "The Age of Apocalypse" storyline, currently running rampant throughout the X-books.

4. GAMBIT

Say it with me, kids: gin-gi-vi-tis. See what happens when you don't floss, readers? It's no wonder that Rogue won't give this guy the time of day. This is only the tip of the iceberg, though. I bet all the X-Men consider dental hygiene secondary to time traveling or swattin' critters like the Brood. Why, just look at Wolverine or Beast. And you just know Jubilee's got like six-gazillion cavities 'cause of all that gum she chews. If I were an X-Man, I'd form a union and tell ol' chrome dome Xavier to get a dental plan for everyone, or he can kiss my big, fat, hairy, mutant butt goodbye. Hmmm...we seem to have gone off on a tangent again. Anyways, the famous ragin' Cajun is burnin' up the X-world, regardless of crusty gumbo in his teeth.

Spider-Man, Wolverine, & Gambit ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group, Spawn is a registered trademark of Todd McFarlane Productions Inc.
Spawn © Todd McFarlane Productions Inc.

5. BATMAN

I always wondered what Bats looked like when he had to take a crap. Hey, y'know, if Batman sticks his tongue out just a little bit, he could probably get it shoved pretty deep up that there nose of his, and give his fingers a rest. Yes sir, *Wizard* sure am good literature. Anywho, I guess it doesn't matter just who's wearing the ol' cape and cowl—the Batguy is still as high-profile as ever (though DC should experiment and see if they can't kill his popularity, by cloning him or something). With that *Batman Forever* movie just around the corner (all right, so it's a long corner) and probably a dozen or two sequels behind that one, you can bet your sweet bippy that the Caped Crusader is in for the long haul.

6. PITT

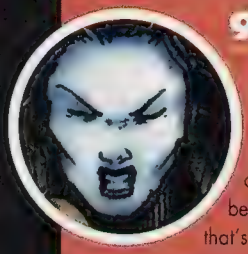
What the hell is Arsenio Hall doing in the Top Ten? Oh, wait, that's not Arsenio. Those giant evil gums fooled me. It's Pitt! C'mon, you didn't think we'd forget Pitt, didja, even though his own book only comes out once every nine months. And what about poor Timmy? At the rate Pitt's going, he'll grow a nose long before he finds the little tyke. But you guys obviously love the big lug, or he wouldn't be poppin' up all over the place, especially here. So, we'll cut 'im some slack...for the moment. But hear us now, O mighty Pitt, find Timmy and get yer book out on a regular basis, or else we'll do something drastic and painful (like bring back Hunk & Babe).

7. LADY DEATH

Without her two breas...er, best assets, Lady Death here wouldn't be as popular as she is, but she's got 'em, so she's still riding high on the current bad girls trend (which is now making Wonder Woman popular. How the hell did *that* happen?). Aside from her more obvious assets (and them neat pupiless eyes), L.D. is also mondo hot thanks to the release of the new *Evil Ernie: Revenge!* mini-series out right now, in which she plays a major role. Will she hang on to the charts? From the looks of things, yeah. She's still leading the pack as far as bad girls go (Vampi, Shi, Lady Rawhide, and such are close behind), and her upcoming new solo mini-series *Lady Death: Between Heaven & Hell* beginning in February pretty much guarantees her a regular spot on the charts.

8. VAMPIRELLA

What the hell is Ookla from *Thundarr the Barbarian* doing here? Oh, wait a minute, this is one of them cute li'l Elfquest guys. Boy, I sure hope Cutter and Skywise have some garlic...wait, that's Vampirella. Boy, it sure gets confusing here in Top Ten Land sometimes (especially since no one edits these things). Anywho, Vampi here is enjoying quite the hot streak, thanks to her monthly book from the gang at Harris, as well as her role in that *Chains of Chaos* mini-series. So with all this goin' on, Vampi (and that li'l strand of phlegm in her mouth) looks to be a regular here at the Top Ten Ranch. (Which, if you'll notice, is now comprised of 40% women! You go, girls!)



9. SHI

Looks like somebody made Shi here read some recent installments of *Wizard*'s Top Ten Heroes and Villains. Either that or she just caught the *Marvel Action Hour* (which should be named the *Marvel Action Five Minutes*, since that's as long as anyone can watch that show). So, anyway, thanks to Bill Tucci's excellent stories and art, *Shi* is one of the spiffier reads out there, and the lead heroine has turned into more than just another pretty face. Expect Shi here to start climbing the market prominence ladder pretty soon, as fans start to really pick up on how good her book really is. (And hey, go read the Bill Tucci interview on page 42! It's good stuff!)

10. ROGUE

Didja notice how all the goils this month are lined up like a third grade birthday party? All the boys on one end and all the girls on the other? C'mon, kids, mingle! Play some fun party games, like pin the tail on the fanboy, musical pants, or tonsil hockey. (Is it me, or is this month's Top Ten particularly offensive? I wonder how many readers we lost this time.) Anyway, let's welcome Rogue to the charts. Thanks to her presence in Marvels's X-books, and her own well-received limited series, Rogue seems poised to start makin' some waves on these charts. How high can she climb? Seeing as how she's got one of them hip-hop X-belt-buckles, our guess is as far as she wants. ☆

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

TEAM AMERICA

Team America? Even the Spider-Clone laughs at these guys. Y'see, HYDRA (that loser bunch of bad guys bent on world domination) tried to create a race of mutants with an experimental mutagenic compound (they didn't know the Marvel Universe would later consist of nothing but mutants). When they didn't see results, they canned the project. Years later, Team America developed their secret powers. And what, you ask, *were* their secret powers? Brace yourself, True Believer, 'cause this one's a doozy. By using a combined mental link, they could create a guy dressed all in black (the Black Marauder), who would drive a motorcycle and pop wheelies and stuff. What pushes these guys over the top of the dung heap, however, are their highly inventive names: Honcho, Wolf, and R.U. Reddy (R.U. a jackass?). One gun, three bullets, problem solved.

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Lady Death ™ & © Brian Pulido. Shi ™ & © William Elliott Tucci. Rogue & Team America ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group.

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Ms. Marvel ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Ms. Marvel #16

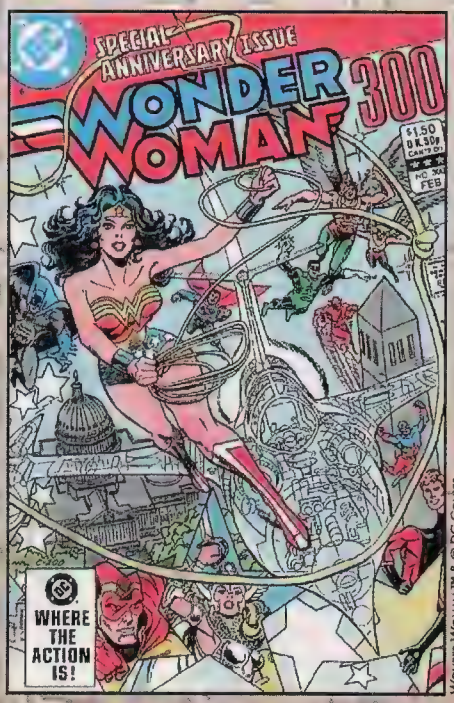
Writer: ***Chris Claremont***
Artist: ***Jim Mooney***
Publisher: ***Marvel Comics***
Release date: ***April 1978***

Well, since we've officially canned Hunk & Babe as of this month (10 bucks says nobody notices), we figured we had to slap some hot bodies somewhere, so here they are. Not only does this ish feature the very babelicious Ms. Marvel (call her "Mrs." and get a high heel in your butt), but it also spotlights the very first appearance of Mystique!

Yes sir, not only does this fill our quota for X-Men back issues here in Comic Watch, but we also get to talk about what a babe she is. First off, she's a redhead, and redheads rule. Second, she's blue, and everyone loves blue chicks (yeah, like you didn't dig Smurfette back when you were 12). So, aside from this ish having the first cameo appearance of a sexy five-foot-eight red-headed Smurf, be aware that Mystique is set to become a much larger player in the Marvel Universe. How so? Well, back in *X-Men Unlimited* #4, it was established that she was Nightcrawler's mom. Then in *X-Factor* #108, she tried to off that time-traveling weasel Legion, and according to them mutant-scribes over at Marvel, she's also on her way to becoming a full-time member of X-Factor.

Boy, she really gets around. With all that said, good luck trying to get your hands on this little gem.

COMIC watch



Wonder Woman ™ & © DC Comics

Wonder Woman (vol. 1) #300

Writers: ***Roy & Dann Thomas***
Artists: ***Gene Colan (framing sequence), various others***
Publisher: ***DC Comics***
Release date: ***February 1983***

Wonder Woman? Who the hell slipped this in here? What is it, the first appearance of the Invisible Plane, or does Wonder Monkey have a cameo or something? And since when is this *Wizard: The Guide to Girly-Man Comics*? Huh? Oh, wait a minute. This ish features the first appearance of Lyta Hall, the chick whose li'l son Daniel appears to be next in line to replace Sandman (who stars in one o' them highbrow Vertigo books. Y'know, the kind of comics with pictures AND words). Seeing as how a big ol' chunk of fandom has worked itself into a frothy frenzy over the current Sandman storyline (which has Lyta Hall figuring in most prominently—she might even *kill* Morpheus!), this ish (Geez, still can't believe there's a *Wonder Woman* back issue in here!) looks to have a lot of promise.

Y'know, we're ashamed of ourselves for ragging on WW like that, so just to be nice, we'll take a closer look at this issue. Let's see...hmm...you've got the Amazon Princess taking a nap in her invisible plane after setting it on autopilot...a metal beach ball...a red-headed Wonder Woman (mwrrrrrrow)...and some pretty snappy banter: "Hey, who is that **woman**, anyway?" "Whoever she is, she sure is a **wonder**!" With all that great stuff, plus Lyta's first appearance, how could this issue not get any hotter?

PICKS
FROM THE WIZARD'S HAT

HERE'S A LISTING OF THE HOTTEST BOOKS SHIPPING IN JANUARY!

After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse

Writers: ***Various***
Artists: ***Various***
Release Date: ***January***
Cover Price: ***$1.95 each book***

We here at Picks Central want to give you the most for your money this month, in case that holiday loot starts burning a hole in your pocket. And it seems the publishers are more than willing to help us out! They've jammed their calendars with enough team-ups, crossovers, and special events to ensure that 1995 hits the ground running.

First out of the hat comes the kick-off to Marvel's X-Men Mega Event, the story that turns the mutant world on its head. Last month, after Professor Charles Xavier was killed 20 years ago (you know what we mean), *X-Men: Alpha* introduced fans to a world dramatically changed by the Prof's absence. This month, that look into an apocalyptic alternate universe expands to include every X-book, revealing major changes to the mutant heroes we thought we knew so well.

The alterations include such devastating reversals as Magneto leading the X-Men on his own; Gambit becoming a jewel thief; Kitty Pryde and her husband Colossus searching for his sister Illyana in the slave pits; Scott Summers working for his stepfather Mr. Sinister; and Wolverine and Phoenix teaming up as the most calamitous couple ever. New costumes and new attitudes make it clear that life without Prof. X means it's time for something completely different.

The creative teams drive home that point by changing the names of all the X-books, except for mini-series already under way and reprint titles. Until someone finds a way out of this new world (in about four months), here's the new lineup: *Cable/X-Man; Excalibur/X-Calibre; Generation X/Generation Next; Uncanny X-Men/The Astonishing X-Men; Wolverine/Weapon X; X-Factor/Factor X; X-Force/Gambit & the X-Ternals; X-Men/The Amazing X-Men;* and *X-Men Unlimited/X-Men Chronicles.*

X-Men ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Extreme Sacrifice

Shaft & Bloodstrike ™ & © Rob Liefeld Inc.

Writers: ***Various***
Artists: ***Various***
Release Date: ***January***
Cover Price: ***$2.50 each book***

There's never been a crossover quite as Extreme as the one planned by Rob Liefeld's studio for January. "We want to be different," says Matt Hawkins, director of marketing. "Everyone tells the Battle of Armageddon; we're going to tell the Battle Beyond Armageddon." The nine-part tale kicks off with Lucifer's dominion over Hell being challenged by Chapel, who committed suicide before Spawn's eyes in *Youngblood* #10 last month. Meanwhile, the mysterious Link, last seen in *Youngblood* #0 two years ago, finally makes his intentions known and confronts Crypt, another mysterious adventurer who has travelled from the future with his own agenda. These clashes will spawn a slew of heart-wrenching battles, which will change the Extreme Universe forever and result in *Team Youngblood* and *Youngblood Strikefile* being canceled, *Prophet* relaunching under Chuck Dixon and Stephen Platt, *Brigade* transforming into the first ongoing team book featuring characters from several Image studios (including Supreme, ShadowHawk, Glory, Roman, Troll, and Vanguard), and a host of characters being revamped—or dying!

Youngblood Strikefile #11 will also celebrate this crossover event by telling the secret origins of Link and Crypt. Readers can also jump right onto new titles, including *Knightmare*, starring a hero/Mafia hit man, and *Mark IV*, featuring a man who discovers a talisman of enormous power.

Godwheel #0-#3

Writers: ***M. W. Barr, J. D. Hudnall, G. Jones, D.Danko, and C. Ulm***
Artists: ***M. Pacella, J. Madureira, A. Lopresti, S. Benefiel, S. Kolins, D. Panosian, G. Frank, and M. Wieringo***
Release Date: ***January***
Cover Price: ***$2.50 each***

Scheduling this four-part mini-series as a bi-weekly gives you an idea of how excited the guys at Malibu are about the title. "We wanted a stand-alone mini-series to serve as a key point in the second wave of the Ultraverse push," says Chris Ulm, coordinating editor and writer of January's kick-off #0 issue. "We want fans to get a taste of the characters without having to buy a lot of titles." The first issue sets a rapid pace, presenting the origin of the deadly new villain Primevil, who will be loose in the Ultraverse by series' end. He joins the recently-introduced NecroMantra, as well as Rune, Lord Pumpkin, and Argus, to seek out the three keys to the Crucible of Life, which will let them rule the strange world of Godwheel. When the dust settles, the Ultraverse won't be the same. "This will be a major transformational experience for some of the characters," Ulm reveals. The heroes set to combat these unnatural killers include Hardcase, Pressure, Feline, Cayman, Flygirl, Mantra, Lukasz, and Warstrike. Also making its debut, which has only been hinted at in the past, will be science fiction writer Larry Niven's contribution to the Ultraverse: a major piece of Ultraverse geography that readers will have to see to believe.

Godwheel ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc.

Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such #1

Jonah Hex ™ & © DC Comics

Writer: ***Joe R. Lansdale***
Artists: ***Timothy Truman & Sam Glanzman***
Release Date: ***January***
Cover Price: ***$2.95***

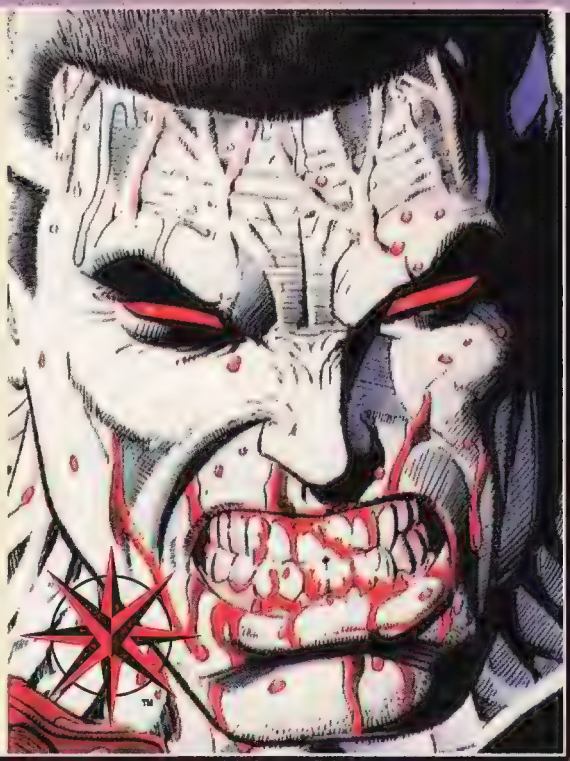
OK, so it's only one comic and it only crosses over into issue #2 next month. But let's face it, any comic that can combine really awful singing cowboys with giant man-eating worms virtually leaps from the hat! This monthly five-parter from DC/Vertigo serves as a follow-up to *Two-Gun Mojo*, Lansdale and Truman's earlier award-winning Hex story. But this time, things are ratcheted up a notch or three. "This story is both more horrific and funnier," says editor Stuart Moore. "In the first series, Joe and Tim wanted to do something in the vein of the classic *Jonah Hex* stories, so they did a pretty straight horror/western. This time they wanted to do something a little further out." If the descriptive and truly hilarious lyrics about diddling cows don't make that clear, then the terrifying worms that aren't too choosy about which warm body they're munching on certainly should. Those slithering creatures are based on several local Indian myths, the creators assure us, and you can be sure that with Truman and Glanzman at the drawing board, the rest of the Western images will be true-to-life, as well. "Tim's a real history buff and likes to include lots of period detail," Moore says, "and what he doesn't know, Sam fills in. They're both big on accuracy." And readers big on literate, unusual, and engaging stories should take a generous gander at this series.

Bloodshot #27

Writer: ***Kevin VanHook***
Artist: ***Sean Chen***
Release Date: ***January***
Cover Price: ***$2.25***

Valiant history has it that the terrible experiment that gave Bloodshot his formidable powers was interrupted before its evil conclusion could be reached. Now its creator, Hideyoshi Iwatsu, finally manages to capture Bloodshot and complete his transformation. The result: Bloodshot has become the perfect killing machine and a slave to Iwatsu's nefarious goals! Ninjak and the Secret Weapons vow to stop their former compatriot one way or another—but even if they do, there's no way to reverse the physical alterations. "Bloodshot is undergoing a definite revamping," says editor Maurice Fontenot. "This is going to be a big change for him overall. His visual look is going to alter forever, and he'll have long-term difficulty dealing with the mental programming he's undergone."

Although his series is not part of the "Bloodshot Rampage" epic, Ninjak plays a key role in trying to reverse the effects in this five-part story, the first three parts of which appear in January, in *Bloodshot* #27 and #28, and *Secret Weapons* #20. As the story proceeds in February's *Bloodshot* #29 and *Secret Weapons* #21, Fontenot reveals, it becomes clear that members of the Secret Weapons team will pay a significant price to stop Bloodshot's rampage. "Para-man is in for a big surprise after he tries to go one-on-one with Bloodshot," he says. By the conclusion, readers won't recognize some of their favorite characters anymore. "We'll be dealing with the ramifications of this storyline in both *Bloodshot* and *Secret Weapons* for a long time."



Bloodshot ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

MORE PICKS

The following pages list the peachiest titles shipping in January. Books marked by a check ✓ sign are comics that should not be overlooked on the often-cramped comic shelf.

Angela #2

IMAGE What do ya do when you're on trial in Heaven? Well, you could call Albert Brooks. Or a demon from Hell. And, hey, that's just what Angela's pals do, when they capture Spawn and bring him to her trial. Beauty and the beast here, team up and escape straight into Hell, courtesy of Spawn's cape. (10 bucks says that halfway home, his cape "runs out of gas." Sneaky li'l devil.) By Neil Gaiman and Greg Capullo. **$2.25**

Aquaman #7

DC COMICS While Aquaman goes up against the Deep Six (the G.I. Joe guy?) and attempts to force 'em to restore Dolphin, his newfound son seeks vengeance for his mother's death and displays some fishy powers. Sounds like the hooked wonder could sure use a hand (ba-da-bump). Also, witness Kako's transformation into a new fire elemental. (Speaking of which, where the hell did Firestorm go?) By Peter David, Marty Egeland, and Howard Shum. **$1.50**

Ash #2

EVENT On top of the Brooklyn Bridge, Ash takes on Theresa from Flatbush. (Theresa from Flatbush? Even Image laughs at that name.) Anyway, this ish, Ash also tussles with a street gang, encounters government agents who're huntin' him down, meets Mike's sister again, and still refuses to eat his mom's leftover chicken. Action any way you slice it, by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.50**

Batman Books

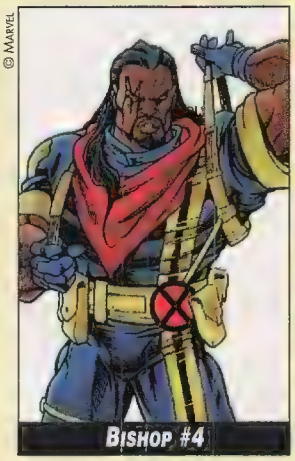
DC COMICS In *Batman* #516, the Batguy seeks out Gotham's newest serial killer, the Sleeper, who's on a murder spree to save her own life. (Yeah, tell it to the cops, scumbag!) Over in *Detective Comics* #683, the Penguin returns, this time running a somewhat legal casino, where a genius known as the Actuary (that Theresa from Flatbush-type crack fits in here, as well) could become Batman's newest adversary. Then waddle on down to *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #36, where the Black Canary's visiting. It seems she's investigating a teenage boy's murder, but Batman's already on the case, and you know how much he likes company (unless you're a young boy in tights, stay outta his face!). Then bounce on up to *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #69 for "Criminals," Part 1 (of 2). Some pretty brutal crimes are being committed in Gotham by convicts sittin' on Death Row, including a suspect that was already executed! The Dark Knight slaps on some grimy makeup to impersonate an inmate and solve this case. **$1.50—*BATMAN, DETECTIVE*; $1.95—*BATMAN: SOTB, BATMAN: LOTDK***

© Quesada & Palmiotti

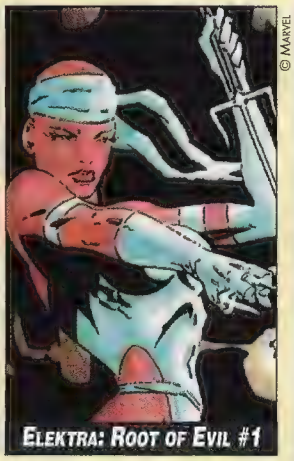
Ash #2

© DC Comics

Batman #516


© Marvel

Bishop #4


© Marvel

Elektra: Root of Evil #1

Bishop #4 (of 4)

MARVEL Bishop goes up against Mountjoy, and after these two clash, Bishop will never be the same again. (Marvel's changing him to a white midget with Turrett's Syndrome). Fun and hijinks by John Ostrander, Carlos Pacheco, and Cam Smith. **$2.95**

Elektra: Root of Evil #1 (of 4)

MARVEL Elektra battles the sinister Snakeroot, but will she be able to kill one of her former lovers? And what's with her big bald head? And isn't she dead? And will Marvel really transform Bishop into a white midget with Turrett's? At least some of that stuff's in here, brought to you by D.G. Chichester and Scott McDaniel. **$2.95**

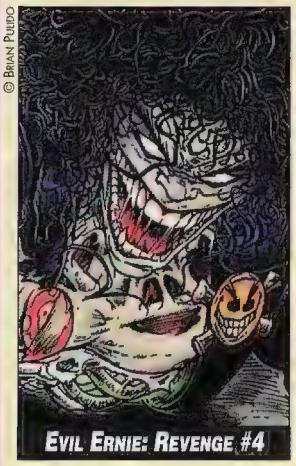
Evil Ernie: Revenge! #4 (of 4)

CHAOS! COMICS What's worse than being buried under 50 tons of concrete and surrounded by enough firepower to blow a hole straight through the Earth to China? *Fantastic Force*? Close, but thankfully Evil Ernie has nothing to do with mucking up Stan and Jack's legacy; he's too busy digging himself out of all that rubble. And to make matters even worse, Mary Young enters his mind and goes gunning for Lady Death. (Yeah, let's see her get near L.D. If you attack her from the front, her natural bumpers'll prevent you from laying a hand on her!) By Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes. **$2.50**

✓ Flash #99

DC COMICS "Terminal Velocity," Part 5 (of 6). Flash goes into overdrive to save Linda from some nasty laser beams, putting his

MORE PICKS


© Brian Pulido

Evil Ernie: Revenge #4

© Bongo Entertainment & Twentieth Century Fox.

Krusty Comics #1

own life in some serious jeopardy. Is this the end of the Flash? By Mark Waid, Sal Larocca, and Jose Marzan Jr. Waid says of the ish, "This is really the climax for Wally. At the end of #99, Wally West is no more. It's time to figure out who will take over the role, but we used the back half of issue #99 to take out those possibilities—like shootin' fish in a barrel. By the end of #99, there is no hope for Keystone City." (Geeez.) **$1.50**

✓ Green Lantern #60

DC COMICS No matter what stupid name he's calling himself or what idiotic costume he's wearing, Guy Gardner just can't stay away from Green Lantern. This issue, Warrior (God, this guy sucks) teams up with GL to go after Major Force and do away with the Quorum. Will Kyle be able to hold back when he fights Force? I mean, the guy *did* kill his girlfriend and shove her in a refrigerator. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks, and Romeo Tanghal. Marz says of the issue, "It's Kyle's first team-up with Guy. The real crux of the story is that Kyle gets a chance to even the score with Major Force for killing his girlfriend, and how that plays itself out. How Kyle exacts his revenge is important in his maturation as a hero. It's a good indicator of how far he's come since he got the ring, and also what kind of hero he can be in the future." **$1.50**

Grendel Tales: Homecoming #2 (of 3)

DARK HORSE After a decade away from home, Susan returns to reawaken an old romance with Avril. Unfortunately, her town is now run by Orion's Bastards, a gang bent on destroying that romance in the same way they crushed the town. (Wow, I can't believe we said bastards in *Wizard*. We're so cutting edge.) By Pat McEown and Dave Cooper. **$2.95**

Hardware #25

MILESTONE/DC Hardware takes on the villainous team of Death Row, consisting of Hangman, Guillotine, Hypo, and Volt. If nothing else, buy this book because it introduces a whole bunch of new super-characters with cool names, which is apparently the second toughest thing to pull off in comics these days, right after good stories. Hats off to Milestone for doing both. By Dwayne McDuffie, Denys Cowan, Humberto Ramos, and Prentis Rollins. **$2.95**

Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special

DARK HORSE It's an anthology chock full o' dream-like stories. In the far future, a mutant housebeast is traded in by his owner for a newer model; a vile dictator from the future hides in the prehistoric past; some nasty little teeth graphically reveal what happens to squealers; and following some lightning, an enormous cyclopean Promethius's body is found in an apple orchard. Adapted by a whole plethora of cool artist-types, with framing sequences written by Ellison and drawn by Eric Shanower. **$4.95**

Icon #23

MILESTONE/DC Are you ready for the new Rocket? Is Dakota? Well, before she makes her debut, she's gotta be trained. And I can't think of anyone better for the job of teacher than a pregnant chick named Raquel (AKA the first Rocket). The two of them quickly learn that some things in life just can't be taught. By M.D. Bright and Mike Gustovich. **$1.75**

Krusty Comics #1 (of 3)

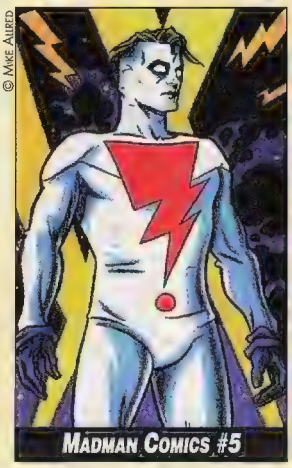
BONGO COMICS "The Rise & Fall of Krustyland!" Hidely Ho, people! It's a Simpsons tale chock full o' hornswaggling and low-down chicanery. Krusty the Clown swindles Ned Flanders and the Junior Campers with a shady land deal. Bart and Lionel "I rest my case" Hutz join the gang in an amusement park gone awry. Plus, the "Incredibly Stimulating Secret Life of Sideshow Mel." By Jamie Angell, Mili Smythe, and Matt Groening. **$2.25**

Lobo #14

DC COMICS "Lobo, P.I.," Part 1 (of 5). Our Main Man travels the galaxy to hunt down the biggest bastich' alive, El Bastardé. But Lobo smells betrayal (and just plain smells!), since someone's tipped off El Bastardé of the hunt (Oooo...we said "Bastardé"!). Also, Lobo opens his own bounty agency, but soon discovers that the paperwork is too much for him to handle. By Alan Grant and John Dell. **$1.95**

✓ Madman Comics #5

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Madman is reunited with the presumed-dead-because-he-took-his-own-artificial-life Astroman, just in time to stop a crazy killer known as The Blast, whose sole purpose


© Mike Allred

Madman Comics #5

© Dale Keown

Pitt #8

MORE PICKS

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #1

ROGUE #3

in life is to destroy Madman. (Shallow guy.) And guess what, kiddies—there's also a surprise mystery guest-star this ish. This snappy tale is brought to you by writer/artist Mike Allred, who says, "With this issue, I really feel like my wheels are turning now. I feel like I've really slipped into a groove. In this issue, I incorporated the winning entry of [*Wizard* #33's] Madman costume contest. I had a great time with it. So, the readers will be able to see who won, and hopefully enjoy the issue as much as I did creating it." **$2.95**

MR. HERO—THE NEWMATIC MAN #3

TEKNO•COMIX Our hero (that's *Mr.* Hero to you) decides to "Image Up" thanks to his taxing battles with the Teknophage's minions. So, he upgrades his armor and jumps straight into battle. (Y'know, between the • and the —, my vote goes to Tekno•Comix for "Comic Company Most Sensitive to the Feelings of Punctuation.") By James Vance, Ted Slampyak, and Bob McLeod. **$1.95**

PITT #8

IMAGE This ish, Pitt goes on a quest to see why it is that he was one of the first Image characters to get a book 'bout two years ago, yet he's only up to issue #8. During the search, all fingers point to Dale Keown for answers, but since nobody knows where he is, he's out of luck. So, Pitt begins a search for Timmy instead, which leads him to Canada's frozen wasteland, and some nasty kidnappers, who demand a severe ransom. By Brian Hotton and Dale Keown. **$1.95**

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #1

DC COMICS Holy Moley! The Big Red Cheese is back! In his first issue, Captain Marvel takes on an urban terrorist, and Billy Batson starts to feel the pressure of being the World's Mightiest Mortal. Hey, how awesome would a team-up between Capt. Marvel and Prime be? Of course, Johnny Bates (AKA Kid Miracleman) would wipe the floor with both of 'em. By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause, and Mike Manley. **$1.50**

✓ ROBIN #15

DC COMICS If the Cluemaster is committing crimes throughout Gotham, then who's that Cluemaster guy in prison? Robin tracks down the Spoiler (the Cluemaster's daughter, as well as Robin's girlfriend-in-waiting), to get the real scoop. Also, Tim hits a snag in the relationship department with Ariana. I just knew he shouldn't have taken her to that Monster Truck Rally. By Chuck Dixon, Tom Grummett, and Ray Kryssing. Dixon says of the issue, "We do get to see the Spoiler in action with Robin and the blossoming teen romance between the two. She's a lot more hot for him than he is [for her]. There's also one hell of a martial arts fight involving a cot, which I'm really proud of. It's stupid, but believe me—just the idea of somebody trying to do a martial arts fight with a cot. You'll never look at a cot the same way. You will believe a cot can fight." OK. **$1.50**

ROGUE #3 (OF 4)

MARVEL Gambit gets his sorry butt captured by the Assassins Guild, so now Rogue's gotta save him, and Cody (Rogue's old boyfriend), too! But who will she save? And will saving one cost the other his life? By Howard Mackie, Mike Wieringo, and Terry Austin. **$2.95**

✓ SANDMAN #68

VERTIGO/DC As we near the end of "The Kindly Ones" (as well as the end of the series), a strange turn of events causes some serious repercussions that will change the very nature of the Dreaming. Hmm, is that general enough for ya? Well, we can also practically guarantee you plenty of weird thingies and lots of symbolic stuff. By Neil Gaiman and Marc Hempel. **$1.95**

SHI #6

CRUSADE COMICS Shi may have finally met her match (and what a match they are!) in the deadly, and of course, beautiful, Tomoe, a warrior of Nara. Yet, it's just like a bad episode of *The Brady Bunch*, when Shi discovers that her newest enemy just happens to be one of her closest friends. Ah, well. Run her through anyway. By William Tucci, Peter Gutierrez, and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.50**

✓ SIN CITY: THE BIG FAT KILL #3

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Here's a question for all you convicts out there: Where do ya unload five stiffs (who happen to be cops), when all the usual places are being watched? Well, if you've got any ideas, Dwight can certainly use 'em, since he's lugging those corpses around in his car trying to get rid of 'em before the mob gets

SHI #6

SPIDER-MAN #56

MORE PICKS

to him. By the mayor of Sin City himself, Frank Miller. **$2.95**

Spawn #28

IMAGE Spawn finally confronts Wanda face to face (ewww, gross!), and she starts to realize why Spawn has entered her life. Also, Spawn's good deed of saving Terry Fitzgerald's life returns to haunt him. Yeah, that's a great way to get back together with your wife, Spawny: save her current husband's life. Sheesh. What a maroon. Now he's never gonna score. By Todd McFarlane and Greg Capullo. **$1.95**

✓ Spectre #27

DC COMICS Azmodus (Hey, the second *Watchmen* reference this month! Just try and find the first!) is back and he's out for the Spectre's blood. Does the Spectre even have blood? The big bad guy starts makin' trouble by going after Madame Xanadu (hubba hubba!). Also, Clarise Winston's daughter makes a deal with the devil. Hope she reads the fine print. By John Ostrander and Tom Mandrake. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books

MARVEL COMICS *Web of Spider-Man* #122 begins the three-part "Smoke and Mirrors" storyline. The clone's (ugh) creator, the Jackal (I'm confused—do we "ugh" him too, or not?) is back with some nasty business in mind. Then swing on by *Amazing Spider-Man* #399 for "Smoke and Mirrors," Part 2 (of 3). Ol' Web-Head and the Scarlet Spider (double ugh) team up to stop the Jackal, who's turned himself into a vicious and deadly monster. When you're done ughing over there, climb on up to *Spider-Man* #56 for the ughtastic finale to "Smoke and Mirrors." Here, the Jackal (like all good-hearted villains) reveals his original plans for Spidey and the creation of the ugh. Plus, is it the return of (can you say ugh squared?) Gwen Stacy? If you're still a Spidey fan after all that, then you might as well pick up *Spectacular Spider-Man* #222 for "The Price of Truth," Part 1 (of 2), and learn who the Jackal really is! **$1.50 EACH; $1.95—*SPIDER-MAN***

Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith, Book 1 #4 (of 6)

DARK HORSE Have you caught that Energizer commercial where Darth Vader loses to the bunny because his lightsaber has

© Aegis

WetWorks #5

© Twentieth Century Fox

X-Files #1

those crappy batteries in it? Vader shoulda just kicked that damn bunny out of an airlock! Anyway, this ish, Jedi Exar Kun searches for that Sith magic in a pretty nasty place. A place so gosh-darn evil that his bond with the light side of the Force is broken and he must use the dark side. By Tom Veitch, Kevin Anderson, Chris Gossett, and Jordi Ensign. **$2.50**

Star Wars: Dark Empire II #2

DARK HORSE "Daba goota, Solo." Well, no, sorry, Greedo doesn't appear this ish, but Han Solo does, however, and he's on the run from every friggin' bounty hunter on Nar Shadda, including Boba Fett. My money's on Boba. I mean, come on, nobody—but nobody—escapes a guy who's that cool! By Tom Veitch and Cam Kennedy. **$2.95**

✓ Superboy #13

DC COMICS "Watery Grave," Part 1 (of 3). When full-blown war with the Silicon Dragons ensues, the li'l "S" must team-up with King Shark, Sidearm, Captain Boomerang, and Knockout. By Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett, and Doug Hazlewood. **$1.50**

Superman Books

DC COMICS In *Superman: The Man of Steel* #42, Metropolis's young rock star Babe's vampiric state can be cured by the enigmatic 'Lock (What's with these stupid apostrophes, anyway? First 'Breed, and now 'Lock!), but it may be too late to save that Olsen clown from Babe's deadly bite! Meanwhile, *Superman* #98 holds the answer to Toyman's madness. (He just can't seem to find a Rogue figure anywhere.) In *Adventures of Superman* #521, Thorn's back in Metropolis (next stop: Boneville), and it looks like Superman and the Riot Grrrls can use some help. Well, that's obvious—they can't even spell! And to wrap up your monthly dose of flying aliens with long hair, check out *Action Comics* #708. Deathtrap is back gunning for Supes, and Mister Miracle's in town to give the "Big S" a hand. **$1.50 EACH**

✓ Tyrant #3

SPIDERBABY GRAFIX "Blood & Berries" concludes with the birth of our esteemed hero, Tyrant. The little guy learns what it

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Superman #98

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Vengeance of Vampirella #10

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Paid or requested circulation (mailed):	15,534	23,669
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Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means:	2,173	2,341
Total Distribution:	302,601	327,830
Copies not distributed:	4,998	916
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(More to be announced)

DARRYL BANKS
Green Lantern, Legion of Super-Heroes
PAT BRODERICK
Doom 2099, Spider-Man & X-Factor, Ragman
JAN DUURSEMA
X-Factor, Hawkman, Hulk
MARTIN EGELAND
Aquaman, Freex
GENE HA
Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix, X-Men Ann. #3, Nightman
CULLY HAMNER
Green Lantern, Firearm
KYLE HOTZ
Ghost Rider 2099, Nightman
TOM MANDRAKE
Spectre, Batman
RON MARZ
Green Lantern, Storm Watch, Silver Surfer
EDDY NEWELL
Black Lightning, Superman, Mos Ann. #2
PAUL PELLETIER
Outsiders, X-Force, Hulk
SAL VELLUTO
Justice League Task Force, X-O Manowar

MORE PICKS

takes to survive in this quirky thing we call life. It takes blood, blood, and more blood! Umm, sorry, at least that's what it took back in the Cretaceous period. This giant lizard epic is brought your way by writer/artist Steven R. Bissette, who says, "The bulk of the book happens inside the egg. I studied embryology for about a four-month period, and the bulk of the book brings the reader inside the egg. You witness the growth of the embryo itself into the full-grown infant ready to hatch. It's also pretty trippy. There's a lot of stuff in here that I can only describe as hallucinogenic. It's all as accurate as I can make it, but there's some very, very strange imagery in this book. It should be entertaining reading." **$2.95**

Vengeance of Vampirella #10

HARRIS Where's Nancy Reagan when you need her? Adam Van Helsing needed to "Just Say No" before he took the Hyde 25 drug that transformed him into Bad Jack. Vampirella and Bishop (Marvel also changed him into a Harris character when they transformed him) spend this issue fighting to save Van Helsing. By Tom Sniegoski and David Perrin. **$2.95**

WetWorks #5

IMAGE Following their vicious battle with the Vampire Nation, Dane's soldiers take a nap. Sounds pretty exciting to me. Plus, Pilgrim begins to metamorphosize, and that Vampire Nation bunch could be dividing into two factions. Hot fun by Whilce Portacio. **$2.50**

X #11

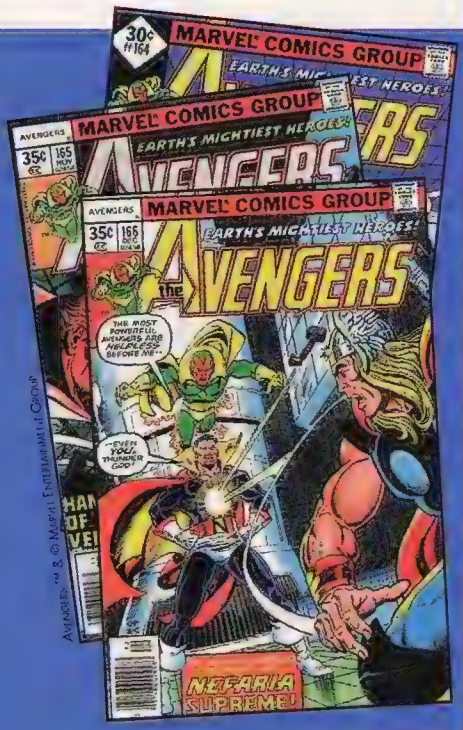
DARK HORSE Another lame-named villain makes his appearance this month. Say hello to Coffin (Y'know, it's not too hard to come up with these. Howabout "Chair" or "Table"? Or even...the dreaded "Sofa."), Comics' Greatest World's newest villain, and the newest pain in X's butt, as the "War for Arcadia" continues. By Steven Grant, Chris Warner, and Tim Bradstreet. **$2.50**

X-Files #1

TOPPS Your favorite agents of the supernatural, Scully and Mulder, jump straight from TV into comics. In their first issue, the duo face off against terrorists, military conspiracies (like the military does anything that's *not* involved in a conspiracy!), religious fanatics (cool!), and flying saucers. Oh yeah, they also encounter some prophecy that may just be the word of God. ("Comics rot your brain! COMICS ROT YOUR BRAIN!!!") By Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard. **$2.50**

good & cheap

by Mike Searle



The Avengers #164-#166

Writer: *Jim Shooter*
Artists: *John Byrne and Pablo Marcos*
Current Total Value: *$18.00 ($6 each)*

All right, any comic which has the Vision dropping out of the sky on someone's head like a runaway kamikaze meteor *has* to be a memorable Avengers story. And *Avengers* #164-#166, with the Avengers versus Count Nefaria, certainly fits the bill. With arguably the best lineup of Avengers ever—Iron Man, Captain America, the Vision, the Scarlet Witch, Yellowjacket, the Wasp, the Beast, Black Panther, Thor, and the newly resurrected (in #163) Wonder Man—the team of writer Jim Shooter and artist John Byrne brings us a three-part slug-o-rama not to be forgotten.

When the mysterious manipulator Count Nefaria employs the new, vastly empowered Lethal Legion to destroy the Avengers—the evil trio of super-strong Power Man (unrelated to Luke Cage), the speedster Whirlwind, and the energy-blasting Living Laser—you know Shellhead and his companions are in for trouble. But when Count Nefaria unexpectedly boosts the Legion's super-abilities, then steals them for himself, the Avengers are confronted with a next-to-impossible foe who topples skyscrapers like dominoes and swats around Thor in his spare time.

How do they stop a living weapon—especially one in a really cool costume? Check out *Avengers* #164-#166 to find out—and see a bunch of heroes and villains trounced in some good, old-fashioned, butt-kicking fun. ☆

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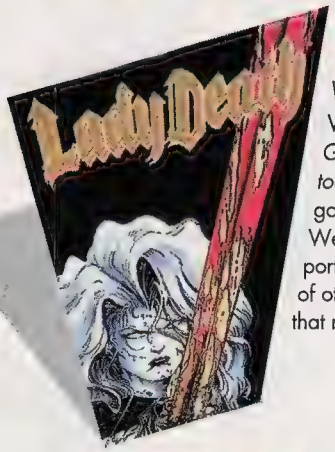
TOP TEN COMICS

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are this month's hottest back issues.**



1. LADY DEATH #1

WRITER: Brian Pulido ARTIST: Steven Hughes

Well, for the sixth straight month, those Image teens continue to reign supreme in the number one spot. *Gen*^{13} just can't seem to...what the? Who the? How the? Hey! They're gone! They're history! They're *toast,* baby!!! After five months in a row, we've finally got a new number one!! Well, a big congrats goes out to Lady Death and her two friends (without whom I'm sure she'd never have made it this far). Well, this lady's got hot, hot, hot written all over her (in blood, no doubt), thanks to her continually supporting role (and she needs a lot of support) in those Evil Ernie books, her own mini-series, and a bunch of other solo projects coming her way in '95. Now, whether ol' Whitey here will be able to hold onto that number one spot for more than a month...well, you'll just have to check back with us in 30.

2. GEN^{13} #1

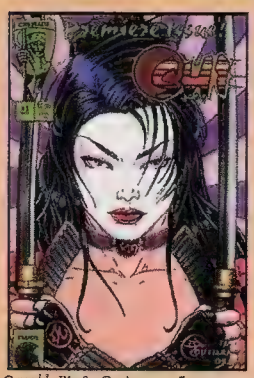
WRITER: Brandon Choi ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

The former heavyweight champ takes a slide to number two this month. But don't count 'em out yet, 'cause with a new series starting in March, fan interest will be at an all-time high. So, obviously all you folks know why this book is so hot: great art, interesting stories (well, actually, the fact that it's an Image book, and it *has* a story, is good enough reason), low print runs—hell, this baby's got it all! So if you're into quality teen books (like, if you read *Robin*, *Superboy*, *The Ray*, *Prime*, or *New Warriors*), check out this title. Yeah, it's got fights and stuff, and nasty bad guys, and bulging people in spandex, but it's a fun ride, too!

3. SHI #1

WRITERS: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez
ARTISTS: William Tucci and Harvey Mercadoocasio

Shi slips a notch this month, but fear not, friends of Shi (sounds like a bad '50s horror movie), 'cause if you look real closely at her face, you can see that she's got that ol' "Eye of the Tiger." Now that *Gen*^{13}'s ego has been bruised, Shi's ready to jump in for the kill and claim that number one spot. And as for Shi's continued success, that's all thanks to that swell Bill Tucci guy, who can tell one heck of a story, and draw one mean-lookin', ninja-fightin', geisha-makeup-wearin' assassin. Sure, there's plenty of Bad Girls out there (with like 64-gazillion more coming this year), but Shi continues to be a solid success and will still be around long after those other Bad Girl wusses have packed up their inflated...uh, egos...and left town.



4. GEN^{13} #2

WRITERS: Brandon Choi and Jeff Mariotte
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Nope. I refuse to do it. I just can't write another freakin' thing about these guys. *Gen*^{13} #1 has been in the top of the charts forever, and this baby's been here forever as well. There's nothing left to say! So, in an effort to spare you the redundancy of why this issue is so hot, as well as to fill up the rest of this space, I'm going to give you a whole bunch of synonyms for the word "redundant," courtesy of my trusty ol' Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. Let's see, we've got diffuse, long-winded, palaverous (ooh, impressive), prolix, verbose, windy, and oh, look, there it is: "monthly listing of *Gen*^{13} in *Wizard*'s Top Ten." So, there you have it. Right there in my book o' synonyms, it lists *Gen*^{13}. Sigh. Guess next month I'll just have to start juggling for ya.

GEN^{13} ™ & © AEGIS ENTERTAINMENT DBA WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS. *LADY DEATH* ™ & © BRIAN PULIDO. *SHI* ™ & © WILLIAM ELLIOTT TUCCI.

5. ZORRO #3

WRITER: Don McGregor
ARTISTS: Mike Mayhew, Andy Mushynsky, and Hilary Barta

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Well, slap a pistol in my holster and carve a huge Z across my butt. *Zorro*'s finally made it to the top five! Wahoo! This awesome series put out by Topps (which also publishes *Mars Attacks* and *Lone Ranger and Tonto*, so go read 'em all!!) is chock full of rockin' storytellin' and spiffy art. This issue contains the first appearance of that Bad Girl Lady Rawhide (She can whip me anytime!), who continues to turn Zorro's life upside down. She loves him. She loves him not. She kills him. She kills him not. With her own mini-series currently in the works, this lady just keeps gettin' hotter and hotter. Pretty soon you'll be able to fry an egg offa that corset o' hers.

6. GENERATION X #1

WRITER: Scott Lobdell
ARTISTS: Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham

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This mighty Marvel mutant book actually has some kickin' scripting by Lobdell, and incredible art by those Bachalo and Buckingham freaks. *Generation X* is the newest teen mutant book, starring headmasters Banshee and the White "va-va-voom" Queen, as well as a whole bunch o' freakin' mutants, who join together for the betterment of all humanity. Aww, how noble of 'em. There's also this really neat guy called Chamber who's got this huge hole in his lower jaw and chest, 'cause his own mutant bio-blasts blew them off. Yeowch! Wonder how he talks without a lower jaw? And if he laughs while drinking milk, will it come out of his nostrils and blow his nose clean off as well?

7. FLASH #92

WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTISTS: Mike Wieringo and José Marzan Jr.

Flash! Aa-aaah! Savior of the universe. Flash! Aa-aaah! He'll save everyone of us! Boom boom boom boom...Sorry, wrong Flash. This issue of the DC Flash (as opposed to the other one who saved all the good folks from that Ming the Merciless character) is burning up the charts (well, crawling is more like it) thanks to the first appearance of that little brat Impulse, soon to be getting his own series. And with *Flash* #100 just seconds away, there's a definite fan fury (as opposed to furry fans) for the ol' speedster's mag. So, run (Ha ha! Run! Get it? Oh, I crack myself up.) out and pick up this issue before prices fly through the roof. And while you're at it, pick up the current issues as well. They make for some mighty fine readin'.

™ & © DC Comics

8. WONDER WOMAN #88

WRITER: Christopher Priest
ARTIST: John Ross

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Oh no, not again! Oh, well, let's get it over with. This issue is only here because it houses the ...snicker...first appearance of...bwah-ha-ha...the goddess Circe as a Bad Girl. Sorry, heh heh. I can't help it, it's *Wonder Woman*. Sportin' a spiffy Brian Bolland cove...wait a minute! Supes has got his arm around Wondie's shoulder. Get yer grubby mitts offa her, Krypton-boy! What, have you forgotten about Lois already? Geez, if the comic book Lois Lane looks anything like Teri Hatcher, I'd never take my arms offa her to grope another dame. Then again, Supes moves with such superspeed that he can grope a boatload o' broads lickety-split, and Lois would never know. It's good to be the last son of Krypton.

9. EVIL ERNIE: REVENGE! #1

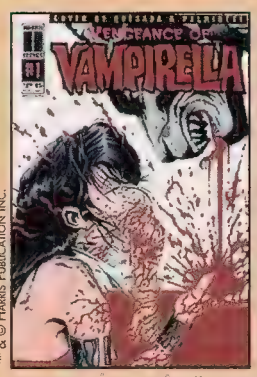
WRITER: Brian Pulido
ARTIST: Steven Hughes

Well, looks like the newest Evil Ernie mini-series from Chaos! Comics has weaseled itself into the Top Ten. This issue, chock full of blood and carnage (no, not that one) continues the tale of the evil one himself as he wreaks havoc (and just plain reeks) among the living. There's also some scenes featuring Lady Death, who has certainly helped make Mr. Ernie Mr. Big with today's readers and collectors. Interestingly enough, aside from the origin recap, Ms. D only appears in a few pages of this ish (but she's still lookin' good), while Ernie and his reanimated Dead Onez battle soldiers and Ghouls in New York City. Even more interestingly, there may be more and more EE fans, thanks to well-done—and literally engrossing—stories like the one in this ish! You never know...

™ & © Brian Pulido

10. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1

WRITER: Tom Sniegoski
ARTIST: Buzz



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This cover reminds me of something. Did you know that if you get sprayed by a skunk, you're supposed to take a bath in tomato juice to dissolve the odor? Yup. Weird as it sounds, that's what they say. Though that's blood Vampi's taking a bath in now, which, apparently, is real good for the skin. Just look at that baby-soft epidermis she's got. And just *try* to find a zit anywhere on her body (which would actually be fun). Anyway, still riding high on the tide of the Bad Girl craze (though not as high as usual), Vampirella rounds off this month's list. But unlike the other psycho death-worshipping female freaks on this month's list, Vampi here is actually something of a good girl. I still wouldn't trust her to babysit the kids, though. ☆

TOP 100

Here's the list for DECEMBER...
a countdown of the most-ordered titles as reported by Diamond Comic Distributors Inc.

(CE=Collector's Edition)

1 year ago... what was hot

1. Spawn #19 (Image)
2. X-Men #29 (Marvel)
3. Uncanny X-Men #309 (Marvel)
4. Superman: The Man of Steel #30 CE (DC)
5. Codename: Stryke Force #1 (Image)
6. WildC.A.T.s #7 (Image)
7. Superboy #1 (DC)
8. Superman #86 (DC)
9. Adventures of Superman #509 (DC)
10. X-Men 2099 #5 (Marvel)

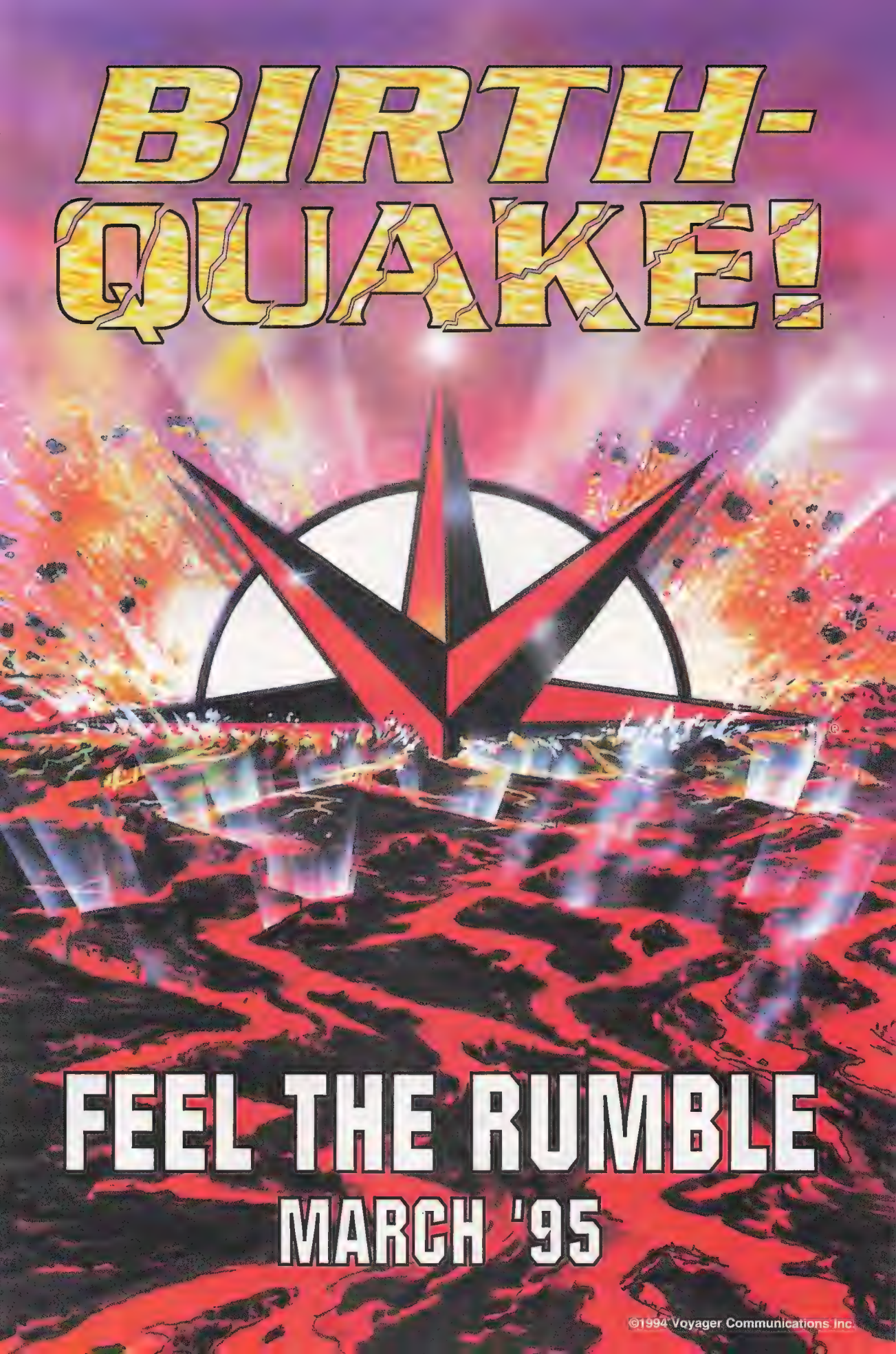
2 years ago...

1. Venom #1 (Marvel)
2. Spawn #8 (Image)
3. Punisher 2099 #1 (Marvel)
4. Pitt #2 (Image)
5. WetWorks #3 (Image)
6. X-Men #17 (Marvel)
7. Uncanny X-Men #297 (Marvel)
8. Spider-Man 2099 #4 (Marvel)
9. Youngblood Battlezone #1 (Image)
10. X-Force #19 (Marvel)

3 years ago...

1. X-Men #5 (Marvel)
2. Uncanny X-Men #285 (Marvel)
3. X-Force #7 (Marvel)
4. Warlock and the Infinity Watch #1 (Marvel)
5. Robin II: The Joker's Wild #4 CE (DC)
6. Spider-Man #19 (Marvel)
7. X-Factor #75 (Marvel)
8. Hearts of Darkness (Marvel)
9. Wolverine #51 (Marvel)
10. Punisher #60 (Marvel)

1. **X-Men Alpha #1 (Marvel)**
2. **X-Men #41 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)**
3. **Uncanny X-Men #321 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)**
4. **Spawn #27 (Image)**
5. **Angela #1 (Image)**
6. **Generation X #4 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)**
7. **Wolverine #90 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)**
8. **Azrael #1 (DC)**
9. **Rogue #2 (Marvel)**
10. **Batman #515 CE (DC)**
11. X-Force #43 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
12. WildC.A.T.s #16 (Image)
13. X-Factor #111 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
14. Bishop #3 (Marvel)
15. Detective Comics #682 CE (DC)
16. Star Wars: Dark Empire II #1 (Dark Horse)
17. Batman vs. Predator II: Bloodmatch #3 (DC)
18. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #35 CE (DC)
19. Superman #97 (DC)
20. Adventures of Superman #520 (DC)
21. Superman: The Man of Steel #41 (DC)
22. Cable #20 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
23. Action Comics #707 (DC)
24. Robin #14 CE (DC)
25. Amazing Spider-Man #398 (Marvel)
26. Team 7 #3 (Image)
27. Cyberforce #10 (Image)
28. Spider-Man #55 (Marvel)
29. Excalibur #86 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
30. Lost Universe #1 (Tekno•Comix)
31. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #68 (DC)
32. Spectacular Spider-Man #221 (Marvel)
33. X-Men 2099 #17 (Marvel)
34. Prophet #9 (Image)
35. Web of Spider-Man #121 (Marvel)
36. Vampirella #0 (Harris)
37. S. Wars: Tales...Dk. Lords...Sith, Bk. 1 #3 (D. Horse)
38. Catwoman #18 (DC)
39. Primortals #2 (Tekno•Comix)
40. Mr. Hero–The Newmatic Man #2 (Tekno•Comix)
41. Cyberforce Origins Special: Cyblade (Image)
42. Incredible Hulk #426 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
43. Green Lantern #59 (DC)
44. Backlash #3 (Image)
45. Sandman #67 (DC)
46. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers #2 (Hamilton)
47. StormWatch #18 (Image)
48. Superboy #12 (DC)
49. WildStorm Swimsuit Special #1 (Image)
50. Fantastic Four #397 (Marvel)
51. The Maxx #12 (Image)
52. Black and White #3 (Image)
53. Strange Tales #1 (Marvel)
54. Savage Dragon #16 (Image)
55. Deathblow #12 (Image)
56. Spider-Man 2099 #28 (Marvel)
57. Venom: Separation Anxiety #3 (Marvel)
58. Vengeance of Vampirella #9 (Harris)
59. Beavis & Butt-Head #12 (Marvel)
60. X-Men: Yr. of the Mutants Coll.'s Preview (Marvel)
61. Sin City: The Big Fat Kill #2 (Dark Horse)
62. Youngblood Year One #2 (Image)
63. Team Youngblood #16 (Image)
64. Codename: Stryke Force #10 (Image)
65. Shaman's Tears #4 (Image)
66. Flash #98 (DC)
67. WildStorm Rarities #1 (Image)
68. Brigade #15 (Image)
69. Battlestone #2 (Image)
70. Silver Surfer #101 (Marvel)
71. Aquaman #6 (DC)
72. Captain America #436 (Marvel)
73. Legend of Supreme #1 (Image)
74. Spider-Man Unlimited #8 (Marvel)
75. Warchild #1 (Maximum)
76. Supreme #22 (Image)
77. Aliens/Predator: Deadliest...Species #9 (D. Horse)
78. ShadowHawk Special #1 (Image)
79. Force Works #8 (Marvel)
80. Lobo #13 (DC)
81. Avengers #383 (Marvel)
82. Bloodstrike #17 (Image)
83. Newmen #9 (Image)
84. Evil Ernie: Revenge! #3 (Chaos!)
85. Steel #12 (DC)
86. Badrock & Company #4 (Image)
87. Daredevil #337 (Marvel)
88. Youngblood Strikefile #10 (Image)
89. Iron Man #313 (Marvel)
90. Groo #1 (Image)
91. Extreme Justice #1 (DC)
92. The Visitor #1 (Valiant)
93. The Books of Magic #10 (DC)
94. Deadly Duo #2 (Image)
95. Hulk 2099 #3 (Marvel)
96. Lobo/Deadman: Brave & the Bald #3 (DC)
97. WildC.A.T.s Adventures #4 (Image)
98. Ghost Rider 2099 #10 (Marvel)
99. Supreme: Glory Days #2 (Image)
100. Simpsons Comics #7 (Bongo)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Wizard Market WATCH

by **Jon Warren**
and **Marc Wilkofsky**

The Market Marathon

As the new year begins, it appears the race is on for comic collectors to find those "Damn, I'm glad I bought that"-type books before someone else grabs 'em (and comic publishers are trying to release those types of books just as fast!). Here's our way of assisting you guys and gals as you speed along to the finish line of a satisfying, valuable collection. (We're like those people who throw runners those essential cups of water!) Before the gun is fired, here's our semi-regular reminder: you can get a lot more out of collecting books if you open 'em up and give 'em a readin'!

BANG! And they're off!

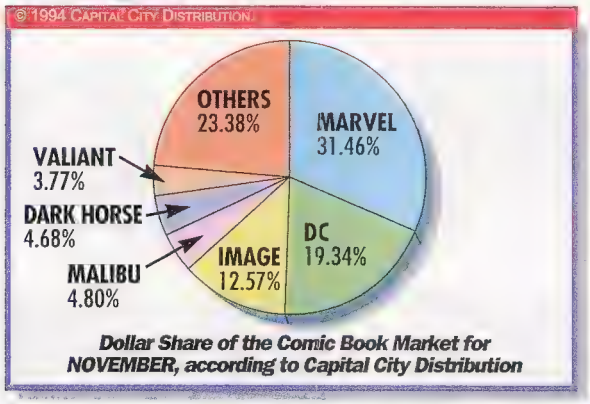
THE HOT RECENT RELEASES (1991-94)

DC books, as usual, are heating up the back issue stands this winter. One of the watchwords is Impulse—this brash, young, and certainly popular speedfreak is about to get his own series, and his first appearance in *Flash* #92 is a fairly strong mover. Also, people are rushing to grab those "Prodigal" issues of the Bat-books—Dick Grayson is finally the Batman, if only on a temporary basis, and both readers and collectors are picking up on this solid storyline. Another can't-miss title is—hold on to your seats—*Wonder Woman*, with Circe's return as a bad girl in #88 and #89 leaping up the important book charts, and Mike Deodato Jr.'s incomparable artwork quickly pushing interest in his books—#90 up, including the hard-to-find #0—through the roof. Issue #93, which teams up both WW's, new and old, has been a hot one, right from the get-go. Rounding out the DC gotta-watch-it group is the new Lobo series—entertaining violence is still in, and the Main Man shouldn't lose his moniker anytime soon.

Marvel: is it only Spider-Man and X-Men? That's the question being voiced by many a collector these days. The "Legion Quest" storyline in the always-hot X-books is taking in masses o' readers; when all is said and done, we expect this particular storyline to hold a bit more weight in the market than the summer's Generation X-spawning "Phalanx Covenant" epic, especially with that leeetle fact that Mr. Haller (Legion) will be killing his pop, Xavier, by the end. It might even be the winter's runaway hit. On the other side of things, Spidey's multi-issue crossover extravaganza thing is not really making any significant strides in the market; the books're still selling fairly well, of course. Are there any other recent Marvel books to watch, you ask—any at all? We'd say—get a hold o' those seats again—*Fantastic Four*'s a contender for watchability. Reed Richards himself is returning to the Four's ranks in #397, and along with the massive jubilee Sue and company will probably hold for him, we predict this title will set off some mini-explosions in the market this winter. Unfortunately, aside from *Beavis and Butt-Head* #2 and #3 recently seeing some cool market activity, that's about it, True Believers.

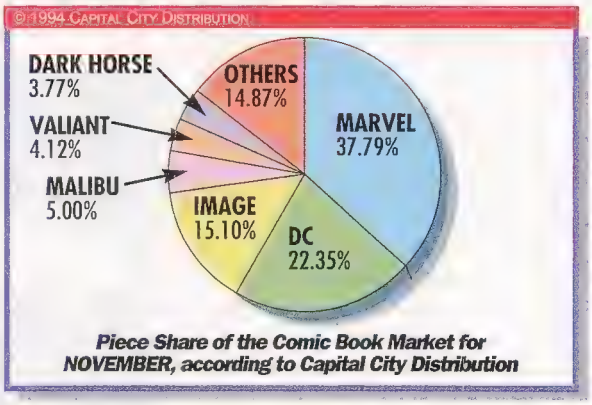
Image is still alive and kickin', and the recent release of *Team 7* is doing well—even the *non-variant* edition is being picked up! Whoa! The title's connection to megahit *Gen*^{13} is probably a good reason for this sales situation. Of course, those eight variant cover books from WildStorm are still taking a bite out of the market, with the special editions of *Gen*^{13}, *Kindred*, and 'toon stars *WildC.A.T.s* at the top of the menu. Also, Violator's first appearance, *Spawn* #4, is back in business with a value jump.

A pleasant semi-surprise in the market is Event's *Ash* #1, which retailers hoped would do well. They weren't disappointed—orders on the first book from Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's company were strong, reception of the



Dollar Share of the Comic Book Market for NOVEMBER, according to Capital City Distribution

Dollar Share: The big winner in November was Malibu, which zoomed up to number four here, basically thanks to a percentage drop for all the other companies except DC (which gained a solid 0.75 points, thanks to its reliably qualitative products). Even Malibu dropped about a tenth of a point, but is enjoying steady interest in its well-produced books and intra-title crossovers.



Piece Share of the Comic Book Market for NOVEMBER, according to Capital City Distribution

Piece Share: Malibu did it again, gaining 0.40 points here, and hitting a strong fourth place. Only DC joined the company in share increases, with a 0.17-point rise. The other four companies were hit by slight losses, with Valiant's November share staying almost exactly the same as that of October. The losses in both types of shares were probably due to the massive amount of available product in the market.

story and overall quality of the book was even stronger, and people are not only starting a sizable search for the issue, but are helping the title out through the all-important word-of-mouth.

Darting into the ol' Bad Girl territory, London Night Studios' book *Razor*, starring a definite BG, has been steadily gaining fans and loyal collectors. The decidedly vicious antiheroine's first ish is positively one of the books to watch, but you can't miss if you find any of her issues in your local store. Those other Bad Girls are not exactly suffering from all their competition, however—each of the three girls leading the pack (Lady Death, Shi, and Vampirella) has just seen her title pumped with a sizable upward value surge. Joining the trio with a whole lotta clout is Lady Rawhide—her first appearance in Topps's *Zorro* #3 is more than a steady mover, and each of her later appearances in the series is being scooped up. The high-quality series itself, along with its recent well-received *Jurassic Park* and *Mars Attacks* offerings, may make Topps a veritable force in the industry in the coming months.

MODERN AGE SELLERS (1970-90)

Here's the fastest, shortest Modern Age report we've had in this column's history: *Sandman* and *Spider-Man*. The two titles out in front of the MA line-up haven't changed since last month: early issues of Morpheus' book—especially those "wearing" the well-known numbers of 1, 8, and 22—and those crazy Clone issues, *Amazing Spider-Man* #149-#151. We'll keep checking to see if any new title becomes popular and pulls out ahead in this area.

POPULAR SILVER AGE BOOKS (1955-70)

As we enter the new year, several comic book firsts from Marvel are eating up the Silver Age road. Among the hottest of them is *Amazing Fantasy* #15, the first appearance and origin of Spider-Man. Lots of collectors and people-in-the-know feel that ol' web-slinger is the Superman of his generation; meaning that the arrival of Spider-Man in the early '60s had as much impact on the evolution of comics as did the appearance of Superman back in the Golden Age. If this is true, then this book is definitely key.

Fantastic Four #1, the first appearance and origin of the FF team, is another book that's super-popular with collectors of Silver Age Marvels. Hey, this was Marvel's first real superhero series, so it's got to have market importance. Also, *Incredible Hulk* #1 is another key Marvel that's tough to locate. Among the early Marvels, this just may be the rarest of 'em all. *X-Men* (vol. 1) #1 rounds out this winning group.

In the DC team, *Showcase* #4, the first appearance and origin of the Silver Age's version of the Flash, is the most valuable of the DCs from this time period, but how hot is it? Very hot, according to our VIPs. The book is hard to keep in stock, according to these retailers which means the current price levels are realistic. Another speedy mover is *Superman* #100, an anniversary issue that many collectors use as the jumpin'-in point for their collections of original Superman comics.

THE GOLDEN AGE MARKET (1938-54)

With all the hoopla surrounding *Star Wars* and other current sci-fi series, which Golden Age science fiction comics do collectors want?

Two early forays into the science fiction genre were published within a month of each other back in the winter of 1940. The first was *Planet Comics* #1, published by Fiction House in January of 1940. The other was *Science Comics* #1, published a month later by Fox Publications. The most valuable of the *Planet Comics* series, which ran from 1940 to 1953, is (not surprisingly) issue #1 (worth $6,000 in Near Mint), but any of the early issues will cost you upwards of $500 or more in top condition.

As for other sci-fi books, *Mystery in Space* #1 is a cool book because, among other things, it sports a great Frank Frazetta cover and eight pages of Frazetta art.

We'll close this part of Market Watch by asking: what's the hottest Golden Age book? That's the question we posed to our gang of VIP

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

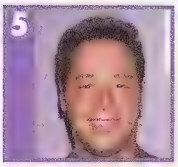
1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

2 **Stephen Platt**
Prophet

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

3 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

4 **Greg Capullo**
Angela



5 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

6 **Rob Liefeld**
Youngblood

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

7 **Andy Kubert**
X-Men

8 **Whilce Portacio**
WetWorks

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **Adam Kubert**
Wolverine

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

10 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

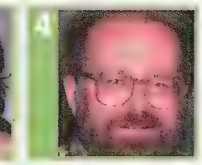
PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

1 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

2 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman, Spider-Man 2099

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

3 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman, Angela



4 **John Byrne**
Next Men, upcoming: Torch of Liberty Special

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

5 **Fabian Nicieza**
X-Men, X-Force

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

6 **Scott Lobdell**
Uncanny X-Men, Generation X

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

7 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

8 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **John Ostrander**
The Spectre, Eternal Warrior

10 **Chris Claremont**
Aliens vs. Predator: D. of S. Cyberforce, upcoming: Sovereign 7

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE DEALER SURVEY.

experts, and the book that nearly all claimed to be "dyin' to buy" was *Action Comics* #1, Supes's first appearance and origin. All we can say is, these guys must be rich—a Near Mint copy would easily bring over $100,000, and even a Very Good copy would fetch enough cash to buy a shiny new BMW. Yet, considering this is the book that started all that came after, it's probably a good buy at almost any price. The race is still on, collectors; get in there, and good luck! ☆

Jon Warren and Marc Wilkofsky are two comic book aficionados who can outwrestle any other price guide editors.

Market WATCHERS

Dear Market Watchers,

In your price guide, you have two different *Sandman* #50s. One of them is listed at $3.25 and the other is a platinum, black cover with stars and is listed at $60.00. I've enclosed a photo of my copy—please tell me which edition this is.

Brandon Rhiness
Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada

Sorry, Brandon, but you have the regular (but still spiffy-lookin') edition—the star-covered edition is the platinum one. One way to tell such versions of the same book apart is by looking at the cover price area on the cover—there's usually no cover price for the special editions. I'm sure this knowledge makes up for the fact that you won't be able to get big bucks for your copy.

Dear Wizard,

Are Wolverine, Logan, and Weapon X all the same person?

Lee Wilson
Floral Park, NY

Yes, they are, but I could see how this could be confusing to someone perusing the Price Guide. Weapon X is the codename Wolverine was given when he was filled with adamantium, and he presently goes by that name in the X-Men time-flip universe. But his buds call him Logan, and his enemies....well, we can't exactly print that.

Dear Market Watchers,

I'm considering dragging my comics along to an upcoming convention to be signed by their creators, and have one question. Does having an autograph on your comic *lower* its value in the long run? In other words, is an uncertified signature considered a defect by collectors?

Rick Rocklein
San Diego, CA

Unfortunately, the answer may just be yes. Here's our Senior Price Guide Editor, Jon Warren, to tell you why: "Rick, an autograph on the cover of a comic doesn't necessarily lower the value of the book, especially if it's a vintage comic with a signature of the likes of Jack Kirby or Stan Lee. But anytime there's a John Hancock on the cover, the authenticity of that signature comes into question. How can you prove that the signature on the cover is real? If you can't prove it, you might have a hard time selling the book."

You heard it from the highly knowledgeable Warrenmeister, Rick—you can take your chances, and get those books 'graphed without certification, or look for a con that offers certificates with all signatures. Good luck, guy!

Dear Wizard,

I recently tried to buy a copy of *X-Men Adventures Season II* #1, but the comic store retailer tried to sell me the comic at a price of $39.95. *Wizard* lists the book at $1.25. What's the story?

José Luis Desales, Jr.
Los Angeles, CA

To be blunt, I strongly hope that your retailer's copy was signed or something, José—you should definitely go back there and check—for otherwise, you avoided what is known as a rip-off. Yes, those are still going on in some comic stores, although there's thankfully many more retailers who are around to brighten people's lives, instead of taking them for all they've got. If I seem pretty serious, it's just that this is a serious matter. All comic collectors—veterans and new ones—should be very careful when purchasing a comic for a fairly high price; taking the time to shop around is absolutely worth it.

Dear Wizard,

I found a comic stored in my dad's old truck, and I'm just wondering how much it's worth. It's *Air Raiders* #1, from Star Comics.

Kenneth Demuchest
Crowley, LA

If that's not a place for storing such a breakthrough (yeah, right) book, I don't know what is. Well, Kenneth, this issue, which was part of Marvel Comics's fairly short-lived kids line, Star Comics, should bring you no more than a dollar. So what else does your father keep in there, Mr. Demuchest?

Dear Wizard,

I have a polybagged issue of *WildC.A.T.s* #4. The polybag is unopened and does not seem to have been tampered with, but the card is missing. Does this affect the value of the comic?

Bonnie Lau
Fremont, CA

Alas, polybooks without their inserts are like Yodels™ without the creamy filling—tasty enough, but not as good as The Real Thing. Collectors would be less interested in those unfortunately-not-too-rare misprints. *¡Lo siento*, Bonnie!

And here's another interesting polybag controversy missive:

Dear Polyurics,

I have come to solve the worldwide, universal polybag debate. Oprah Winfrey, eat your heart out. First, let's recap.

Mr. Balbo (Market Watchers, issue #36) says polybags ruin comics, Mr. Premo (issue #38) says a damaged polybag equals a damaged comic, Mr. Newman (#38) doesn't realize that if he keeps one *Adventures of Superman* #500 in and one out he'll win either way, and Mr. Nickell (also #38) would just like to "...Mylite all the way!" (Pretty catchy, NORF!)

If you collect comic books because you like to read them, open away! On the other hand, if you're into comics for profit, get into baseball cards instead (just kidding, NORF)—keep them in the bag.

Example: have you seen the prices on an original Pepsi bottle? How much would an unopened, original Pepsi bottle be worth? 10, 20, maybe even 100 times more. Of course, it would possibly be green, but then again, so is the Statue of Liberty, and possibly, your polybagged comic.

Your problem solver,
Jonathan A. Reth
Fairhaven, MA

I can agree with Jonathan's third paragraph—simple but true. However, am I the only one who doesn't understand his closing paragraph? And just what the heck is a NORF?

That's all for this time, Watchers! Happy new year and all that!

-Marc Wilkofsky
Crowd Control

Hey, Watchers! We know you've got a question about our Price Guide, or comic collecting in general, burning up your thermal underwear! So please send your letters to:

MARKET WATCHERS
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

SHOWS & CONVENTIONS

To help connect you with the biggest and best comic book shows and conventions in your area, *Wizard* is still printing all the stuff we used to print in this department. But we've added extra space so you can find out in advance about admission discounts, creator appearances, and other superneat stuff!

These listings are as accurate as we can get 'em, but *Wizard* always recommends phoning ahead before you attend an event—show information sometimes changes after we go to press. With that in mind, it's time for all you comic-hungry hordes to go conventioneering!

ALABAMA

JANUARY 7, HUNTSVILLE

Card, Comic, and Racing Show, Jaycee Community Building, Old Airport Rd., 35 tables @ $30 each, $1.50 admission, 9am-4pm. Contact: Linda or Clay Pogue @ 615-962-2354 days, 615-469-7227 nights.

CALIFORNIA

TUESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS THROUGHOUT JANUARY, WHITTIER

Cardtown USA, 12327 Whittier Blvd. at the corner of Penn St., 2 miles east of the 605 Freeway, free admission, Tuesdays & Fridays 5pm-9:30pm, Saturdays & Sundays 11am-6pm. Special members drawing every show, always free parking, occasional guest appearances. Contact: Roger Sparling @ 310-693-1978.

JANUARY 14, SAN MATEO

San Mateo Sports Card & Comic Book Show, Dynfey Hotel, 1770 South Amphlett Blvd. (Hwy. 92 @ Hwy. 101), 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Al Jang/Damon Jang @ 415-386-9036.

JANUARY 21, SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Sports Card & Comic Book Show, Cathedral Hill Hotel, 1101 Van Ness Ave. @ Geary Blvd., 50 tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Guest: call for info. Contact: Al Jang/Damon Jang @ 415-386-9036.

FEBRUARY 24-26, SAN FRANCISCO

Super Comic & Collectibles Expo, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave. & Santos, 150 tables, table fee to be announced, $5 per day admission (3-day pass $12), Friday Noon-8:00pm, Sat. & Sun. 10am-6pm. Guests: Whilce Portacio (*WetWorks*) and other Image creators will appear. SUPER SLAM POGS CONTEST; *Magic: The Gathering* Tournament. Win original Image artwork. Featuring Golden, Silver, and Modern Age books, toys, figures, sportscards, *Magic* cards & POGs. Look in future *Wizard* issues for further details. Contact: Bill Lee @ 415-333-8100.

CONNECTICUT

JANUARY 28, 29, MILFORD

Baseball Card and Comic Book Mania, Knights of Columbus Hall, 625 Bridgeport Ave., Exit 34 on I-95, left on Route 1, 1/4 mile to show, 60 tables @ $120 each for full weekend, $2 adult admission (children under 10 $1.00), 9:30am-3:30pm each day. $1,000 gift certificate giveaway each day, eight prizes an hour (to be spent at dealers' tables), overnight security will be provided. Contact: Aurella Wacks @ 203-874-3545.

DELAWARE

JANUARY 21, NEWARK

Small Wonder! Con, Best Western, Newark, I-95 Exit 3 (Dover), next to University Plaza, 30-plus tables @ $50 each ($40 in advance), $3 admission, 10:30am-4:30pm. Items include: comics, sports & non-sports cards, videos, and toys. Guest: to be announced—call 1-800-803-5909 for the latest information after December 26. For more information, contact: Joe Hummel @ 302-456-3055.

FLORIDA

MARCH 25, 26, ORLANDO

Florida MEGA-CON, Orlando Expo-Center, 500 West Livingston, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-6pm. Meet your favorite artists and creators! Participate in panel discussions! Great giveaways! Contact: Skyline Promotions @ 407-426-7745.

GEORGIA

JANUARY 6-8, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or local, 923-5557.

JANUARY 13-15, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or local, 923-5557.

JANUARY 20-22, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or local, 923-5557.

JANUARY 27-29, LILBURN/ATLANTA

P.T. Shows Cards and Collectibles Show, Lilburn Crossing Shopping Center at Hwy. 29 & Beaver Ruin Rd., 70 tables @ $65 each, $1 admission daily (children under 6 free), Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 800-251-5150, or local, 923-5557.

INDIANA

JANUARY 6-8, INDIANAPOLIS

Hoosier Comic Show, East Gate Consumer Mall, 7150 East Washington St., 8-foot tables available @ $70 each for 3 days, free admission, Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 12pm-4pm. Contact: Rick Garcia @ 317-357-9999.

KENTUCKY

JANUARY 14, 15, LOUISVILLE

Comics, Cards, & Music, Ramada Inn, Brownsboro Road (Exit 22, I-264), 40 tables @ $30 each per day, $1 admission, Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. Contact: Wally Ross @ 502-228-9707.

MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 15, WOBURN

Monthly Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Ramada Hotel, Exit 35 off of Route 128, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 adult admission (entrants 16 and under $1, children 5 and under free), 11am-4pm. Prizes, giveaways, and more. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336 or the Ramada Hotel for directions.

JANUARY 15, WOBURN

Woburn's Original Show, Howard Johnson Convention Facility, Exit 36 off Route 93, 120 tables @ $40 each, 2 for $75, or 3 for $100, $1 admission, 9am-3pm. 2 big rooms: 1 for cards and 1 for comics—2 shows for one small admission price! Contact: Billy Hedin or Rebecca Drake @ 508-620-7585.

JANUARY 22, ROCKLAND

Monthly Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Ramada

Inn, Exit 14 (Route 228) off of Route 3, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 adult admission (entrants 16 and under $1, children 5 and under free), 11am-4pm. Prizes, giveaways, and more. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336 or the Ramada Inn at 617-871-0545 for directions.

JANUARY 29, NATICK

Monthly Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, Route 9E off of Route 30, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 adult admission (entrants 16 and under $1, children 5 and under free), 11am-4pm. Prizes, giveaways, and more. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336 or the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza at 508-653-8800 for directions.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

JANUARY 8, NASHUA

Monthly Comic and Non-Sport Card Show, Holiday Inn, Exit 4 off of Route 3, 35 tables @ $50 each, $2 adult admission (entrants 16 and under $1, children 5 and under free), 11am-4pm. Prizes, giveaways, and more. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336 or the Holiday Inn at 603-888-1551 for directions.

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 7, WOODBRIDGE

Comic Book Marketplace, The Sheraton Hotel, 515 Rt. 1 South, across from the Woodbridge Mall, 40 tables @ $55 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Guests: Robert Schaeffer (editor), Sebastian Mondrone (writer), and Alex (artist) of *Nova Hunter* from Ryal Comics. Door prizes, including $200 in show cash. Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

JANUARY 8, BORDENTOWN

Comic Book Marketplace, the Days Inn Hotel, Rt. 206 North off Exit 7 of the New Jersey Turnpike, 30 tables @ $55 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Guest: Doug Baron (creator/artist, Sugar Ray Finhead). Door prizes, including $200 in show cash. Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

OHIO

FEBRUARY 4, 5, AKRON

Akron-Canton Comic Con, Tadmor Hall, I-77 at Exit 120, 72 tables @ $175 each, $6 admission daily, $10 for both days (children 6 and under are free), Sat. 11am-6pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. Guests: Jeff Albrecht (*Justice League Task Force, X-Men Adventures*), Darryl Banks (*Green Lantern, Legion of Super-Heroes*), Pat Broderick (*Doom 2099, Spider-Man & X-Factor: Shadowgames, Ragman*), Robert Campanella (*Outsiders, Wonder Woman*), Jan Duursema (*X-Factor, Hawkman, Hulk*), Martin Egeland (*Aquaman, Freex*), Gene Ha (*Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix, X-Men Annual #3, The Night Man*), Cully Hamner (*Green Lantern, Firearm*), Kyle Hotz (*Ghost Rider 2099, The Night Man*), Rick Magyar—Sat. only (*Frankenstein, Lone Ranger and Tonto*), Tom Mandrake (*Spectre, Batman*), Ron Marz (*Green Lantern, StormWatch, Silver Surfer*), Rick Mays (*Nomad, New Titans* #112 and #114), Eddy Newell (*Black Lighting, Superman: Man of Steel Ann. #2*), Paul Pelletier (*Outsiders, X-Force, Hulk*), Karl Story (*Legionnaires, New Titans* #114), William Tucci—tentative (*Shi*), Sal Velluto (*Justice League Task Force, X-O Manowar*). Contact Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056.

OREGON

JANUARY 7-9, BEAVERTON

Beaverton Mall Card/Comic Show #3, Beaverton Mall, 3275 S.W. Cedar Hills Blvd., 60 tables @ $110 each for 3 days, $90 each for Sat. & Sun., free admission, Fri. 10am-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-5pm. Contact: Dewey Tucker @ 503-526-9655.

PENNSYLVANIA

JANUARY 7, LANGHORNE

Comics & Cards, Sheraton Bucks County, 400 Oxford Valley Road, 55 tables @ $40 each, $1 admission, 9am-3pm. Contact: Greg Petrino @ 215-968-8577.

JANUARY 14, 15, CHADDS FORD

Defense Con '95, Ramada Inn, on Routes 202 & 1 at 1110 Baltimore Pike, 50 tables @ $350 each, $8.50 1 day, $15 2-day admission, Sat. 11am-7pm, Sun. 10am-6pm. Guests: Chris Allan (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adv.*), Caesar & Buzz (*Vengeance of Vampirella*), Chris Batista (*Steel*), Charles Barnett III (*Star Trek: T.N.G.—Shadowheart*), Colleen Doran (*A Distant Soil*), Rick Leonardi (*Spider-Man 2099*), Steve Lieber (*Hawkman*), Larry Mahlstedt (*Amazing Spider-Man*), Doug Moench (*Batman*), Joe Monks (*Cry For Dawn*), Gray Morrow (*Power Rangers*, "Homicide" stories in *Dark Horse Presents*), Kurt Schaffenberger (*Superman, Lois Lane*), Don Simpson (*Megaton Man*), Howard Simpson (*Turok, Dinosaur Hunter*), Louis Small Jr. (*Vampirella*), John Stinsman (*Bloodstrike*), Lee Weeks (*Gambit*), Michael Bair (*Shi, Unity: The Lost Chapter*), some surprise guests from Wizards of the Coast, and many more. Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

TENNESSEE

JANUARY 14, CHATTANOOGA

Card, Comic, and Racing Show, Days Inn, I-75 East Ridge Exit, 35 tables @ $45 each, $1.50 admission, 9am-4pm. Contact: Linda or Clay Pogue @ 615-962-2354 days, 615-469-7227 nights.

TEXAS

JANUARY 8, BEAUMONT

Comic and Card Show, Holiday Inn, Beaumont Plaza, I-10W @ Walden Road, 30 tables @ $30 each, $1 admission, 10am-4pm. Door prizes and *Magic: The Gathering* cards. Contact: Richard Lim @ 713-449-8511.

JANUARY 8, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Show, Holiday Inn, I-10 & Silber, 7611 Katy Freeway, Exit Silber, 40 tables @ $65 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes. Free pack of Marvel comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

JANUARY 8, HOUSTON

Comic, Card & Toy Show, Travelodge Hotel, Greenway Plaza, 2828 Southwest Freeway, Exit Kirby Drive, 40 tables @ $50 each, free admission and parking, 10am-5pm. First 100 entrants over age 8 and prior to 10:30am will receive a door prize worth $10. $25 show spending sprees every 30 minutes, with a great grand prize. Contact: Mark A. Racey @ 713-479-6477.

JANUARY 14, AUSTIN

Card and Comic Show, Embassy Suites Hotel, 5901 North I-H35, 34 tables @ $55 each or 2 for $100, $1.50 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards & comics. Free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

JANUARY 14, 15, SAN ANTONIO

Comic & Card Show, Embassy Suites Hotel, 7750 Briaridge, 40 tables @ $40 each, $1 admission, Sat. 9:30am-3:30pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. Door prizes and *Magic: The Gathering* cards. Contact: Richard Lim @ 713-449-8511.

JANUARY 15, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Show, Holiday Inn Southwest, 11160 S.W. Freeway, 59 South, at Beltway 8, 35 tables @ $65 each, $2.00 admission, time TBA. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Free pack of Marvel comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

JANUARY 22, HOUSTON

Comic, Card & Toy Show, Travelodge Hotel, Greenway Plaza, 2828 Southwest Freeway, Exit Kirby Drive, 40 tables @ $50 each, free admission and parking, 10am-5pm. First 100 entrants over age 8 and prior to 10:30am will receive a door prize worth $10. $25 show spending sprees every 30 minutes with a great grand prize. Contact: Mark A. Racey @ 713-479-6477.

JANUARY 22, HOUSTON

Comic Carnival '95, Hobby Holiday Inn, 9600 Gulf Freeway, I-45 South (Exit College Airport), 60 tables @ $60 each, $3 admission (children under 7 $1.00), 10:30am-5pm. Guests: to be announced. Tons of comics, non-sports cards, and *Magic* cards. Contact: D. Jennings for more information (24-hour hotline): 713-335-SHOW (7469).

JANUARY 22, SAN ANTONIO

Card and Comic Show, Wyndham Hotel (I-10 & Wurzbach), 40 tables @ $55 each or 2 for $100, $1 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes. Free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

JANUARY 22, SAN ANTONIO

In-Store Appearance, Card & Comic Depot, 451 Bandera Road Suite #1, 10am-12:30pm. Guests: Extreme's Stephen Platt, Chap Yaep, Jonathan Sibal, and Marlo Alquiza, on the Extreme Super Tour. For more information, contact Mark Cano @ 210-433-1752.

JANUARY 28, 29, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn Northwest, 14996 N.W. Freeway, Highway 290 Exit West Little York, 35 tables @ $125 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm (both days). Door prize drawings every 30 minutes. Free pack of Marvel comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

JANUARY 29, AUSTIN

Card and Comic Show, Embassy Suites Hotel, 5901 North I-H35, 34 tables @ $55 each or 2 for $100, $1.50 admission, 9am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Free pack of comic cards with this ad & paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

FEBRUARY 5, HOUSTON

The Dark Side of the Moon Comic Book Convention, Sheraton Grand Hotel, 2525 West Loop South (Galleria area), 45 tables @ $60 each, $2.50 admission, 10am-10pm. Comic book auction, X-Men Marathon, free video games, art contest, free first issue Image comic book to the first 100 paid attendees, door prizes every half hour, cartoon and movie screenings all day. Contact: Jason Ginsburg @ 713-666-1556.

VIRGINIA

JANUARY 7, TYSONS CORNER/FALLS CHURCH

Comic Book & Trading Card Show, Ramada Hotel, 7801 Leesburg Pike (Falls Church), 80 tables @ $65 each, $2 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Jeff Rocen @ 703-503-5834.

If you'd like to use *Wizard's* magic to help advertise your comic book event, call Karen Evora at (914) 268-3907.

Strike Two

by Todd McFarlane

As most of you are aware, both Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League are on strike as of this writing. Though hockey hasn't proven as popular as baseball in America, I can tell you that it is the hockey strike that's killing me 10 times worse than baseball's. Baseball is a sport that I grew up with and continue to play today; I love playing the game, but I'm not much for watching it. Hockey is a sport I watch, since I don't know how to skate due to my growing up in California. So, I must admit it is extremely frustrating to me that I can't watch it; with baseball, I can just go out to a field and play it.

One of the issues with the hockey strike, in general, is that management is saying that players' salaries are escalating to the point where the franchise is not making any profit. As a person who's been on both sides of the negotiating table—as a worker and a business owner—I can tell you right now that the rising cost of players' salaries is only derived from management, whether it be in the form of a general manager or the president or owners.

As a type of manager, myself, in Image Comics, any one of my employees can come to my office and ask me for a raise any time; it is not necessary for me to actually give them that raise. It doesn't surprise me, then, that players are asking for $100 million contracts in the National Basketball Association—let them ask for whatever they want. What stuns me is that management is actually *giving in* to paying $70 to $80 million contracts. If the people who own these teams are supposed to be shrewd businessmen, then I fear for their other businesses, because the way to make a profit in that type of business is to selectively look at each player and see whether they're worth the value the players say they are.

On a smaller everyday scale, if I have a car that breaks down, I'll phone around town to see which mechanic could do the best job to fix the car at the best price. If one mechanic wants $40 an hour and another $20, yet both can do the same job with equal quality, then, with rare exceptions, I'll go with the $20-an-hour mechanic.

In hockey, baseball, or any other sport, it has been the management that has OKed every single salary contract. Now that the prices have gotten high without making a profit, management now wants to place the burden onto their employees, i.e. the players, by placing a limit on salaries.

One of the proposals brought up in the hockey (and baseball, for that matter) strike that will just not work in North America is revenue sharing. It can't exist, because in a free capitalist society, one cannot reward someone who is not doing a good job. For instance, in hockey, the Winnepeg Jets—a small-market team—isn't doing great and is projected to lose between $6 and $8 million dollars. What the Jets are trying to do is cut costs by cutting players' salaries. Revenue sharing would keep teams like this afloat with money made by another more successful team, because there are a lot of factors that can determine why a team is not making money.

It can be that: A) players are overpaid, which is a reason that management will go for; B) a team has too many executives in its company that are overpaid; C) a team has bad player scouts that "discover" bad talent, securing a team's dismal future; D) a team has bad public relations people who aren't exciting fans and bringing them into the arena to watch the games; or E) the team's management isn't doing its job, which trickles down to the playing field, meaning fans won't come to see the games.

In terms of spreading the wealth at Image, if one creator's book sells more than another's, that doesn't mean that the guy who's selling more should help out the guy who's selling less. Maybe the guy who's selling more is doing a better job than the other guy.

If you're a bad businessman—and this goes for any business, whether it be baseball or comics—why should everyone else in the company pay for you being a bad businessman? If you can't make a profit, then get out of the business.

In my mind, management is 90 percent at fault for what's happened with baseball and hockey. It is management who determines the fair market value of any player. When I worked for Marvel Comics and I asked for a raise, the company based my worth amongst everyone else who worked for them, therefore determining my fair market value. So, if a player is making $10 million a year, it is because management has determined that that's what he's worth.

Now, the average Joe would say, "He's making $10 million, and should be content with that," but I think that people are missing the point that money doesn't override everything. If you are at a job where you are doing a better job than the guy sitting next to you, and that guy is paid more than you, then you would feel infuriated, too.

I'd love to own a hockey team right now. If I didn't want to pay a player a high salary, I'd trade him for a couple of good, seasoned vets. Would I have a lot of turnaround? Sure, but I'd have a lot of young players who are hungry and want to play the game.

The players can always ask for more, but management can always say one thing: "No thanks, we'll find somebody else."

I wish hockey's management would get its act together so that I could see some hockey. ☆

Todd McFarlane is a co-founder of Image Comics, and is the writer and artist of Spawn.

Any industry professional who wishes to respond to the information or opinions stated here should write to: E.G.O., 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

*EVERYONE'S GOT OPINIONS

The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*, its editorial staff, or Image Comics.

Wizard Bullpen

SEARCH & DESTROY!

Seeing as how the softball season is over, and we can't bowl to save our lives (as a side note, the *Wizard* bowling team was so pathetic that we're having trouble lining up a rematch in any sport. Yeesh.), a bunch of rough`n´ready Wizard Pressers (Pressers?) got together and headed up to the mountains for some paintball! (That being the game where everyone gets air-powered guns that shoot paint projectiles and spend their time hunting each other down.) So who went? *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum, Art Director Matt "Sgt. Furious" Tierney, *Sportslook* Art Director Brad Fountain, Designer Steve Blackwell, *E.R.* Senior Editor Mike Searle, Art Director Robin Ramos, Wizard Press Production Director Doug Goldstein, Computer Specialist Ben Todd, and a bunch of good friends masked up and went huntin'. Game highlights included Pat McCallum climbing down a 40-foot cliff in an attempt to catch Matt Tierney unawares (only to be out of CO^2 when he reached the bottom. Nyah-ha!), Steve Blackwell getting shot in the noggin in back-to-back games (ouch!), and Mike Searle with the all-or-nothing mad dash, capturing the enemy's flag, and notching the final win of the day!

A Pizza Hut feast rounded out the day, and a wild time was had by all.

DECAF PLEASE

After last month's leviathan-esque Year-End issue of *Wizard*, all'a us here at Wizard Press HQ took some serious R & R. Here're some useful relaxing tips from the occasionally twitchy *Wizard* staff:

Brian Cunningham, *Editor*: "I take a deep breath or play with a yo-yo."
Mike Fasolo, *Research Editor*: "I don't let stress enter my life."
Doug Goldstein, *Production Director*: "I play with my cats."
Andrew Kardon, *Copy Editor*: "I pop on an old Twisted Sister album and bang my head against the wall until consciousness is lost."
Bob Marshall, *Editorial Assistant*: "I suck the blood out of all the people who piss me off."
Pat McCallum, *Editor-in-Chief*: "Enjoy a good video game (Super Metroid), read a good book (*Salem's Lot*), or go out with friends."
David Prager, *Editorial Assistant*: "Play video games."
Arlene So, *Design Assistant*: "I go mall hopping."
Matt Tierney, *Art Director*: "Mountain biking."
Marc Wilkofsky, *Contributing Editor*: "Listening to country music."

WHO ARE YOU?

David Prager
Editorial Assistant, *Wizard: The Guide To Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I produce the Card Price Guide, compile the Top Ten and Top 100 lists, and create all Comic Book Price Guide surveys, and I am the official *Wizard* illustrator. I'm also called upon for strange noises, and room decorations and mutilations.

Your favorite sections in *Wizard*?
CBIQ and the If You Missed listings.

What is the one thing you like most about your job?
Where else can you read comics, collect cards, and draw all day, and get paid for it?

Last good movie you saw?
Pulp Fiction.

Last good book you read?
It's a toss-up: *Illusions*, by Richard Bach, *The Tao of Pooh*, by Benjamin Hoff, or *The Scorpio Illusion*, by Robert Ludlum.

What would your biography be called?
A Little Short for a Stormtrooper.

Favorite TV show?
The Simpsons. I am a Simpsons slave—I haven't missed an episode.

Favorite icons of pop culture?
William Shatner (Dammit, it's his real hair!)...and Marc Wilkofsky.

Who would play you in a movie?
Nell Carter. Actually, Gareb Shamus—we supposedly look alike—or Josh Saviano (Paul, from *The Wonder Years*), older and 35 pounds heavier.

Actress with whom you'd like to star in a film?
Uma Thurman (Yowza!). Or the Olsen twins—they would have to die, of course.

Favorite comic right now?
Bone—love Smith's artwork and storytelling. The man's a genius.

What superpower would you want, and why?
I had the power of flight for a while, but it left me, and it wasn't all it was cracked up to be. I'd like to have really bendy thumbs, and the ability to shoot laser blasts out of my navel.

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PRAGER HIMSELF!

Wizard's Top 10 New Year's Resolutions:

10. Free O.J.
9. Fess up to the fact that we're single-handedly responsible for everything that's bad about the comic book industry.
8. Get more X-Men and Image characters on our cover.
7. Get the mysterious White Ranger on our side.
6. Eat more brains...er, bran.
5. *Reallllly* start ragging on the Spider-Clone.
4. Finish helipad.
3. Drink five, no, six cups of strawberry milk a day.
2. Alienate our last three female readers by continuing to use the words "babe," "chick," and "tomato."
1. Two words: courtesy flush.

COLLECTOR'S SPORTSLOOK #15

So you're lying there on the couch with your hands in your pockets, watching football. You see the Cowboys' QB Troy Aikman go down. "What a wimp," you say. "That guy always gets injured." Then the dreams begin. You, the main man, leading "America's Team" to the promised land. Money. Fame. Chicks. It's a dream most kids have, but little Bobby Warner has taken it to the extreme—he actually thinks he's Troy Aikman. Read all about it in the February issue of *Collector's Sportslook*. This issue also has **an exclusive Upper Deck Super Bowl card offer**, three awesome contests, and a guy named Jim (McLauchlin, that is!). **$3.95**

IN QUEST

Wizard Press presents a special publication, *In Quest*, focusing on the hot new market of collectible trading card games. This special sports an enchanting original cover by renowned artist **Anson Maddocks**, along with your chance to win the original artwork. You'll also find in-depth interviews with *Magic: The Gathering* creator, **Richard Garfield**, as well as other top designers. Other features include a look ahead at upcoming card sets: fantasy, sport, and entertainment; and an **extensive checklist and price guide** to show how much your cards are worth. Each issue includes its very own **Wizard Press trading card**. Join the quest this January! **$2.95**

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M A D E I N T H E U . S . A .

Rip into it!
• Jammin' WarBlade/Ripclaw cover!
• Smokin' Flash & Impulse poster by Mike Wieringo!
• Surprise mini-comic! (Ooooh...)
And...
The debut of John Byrne's new art column!
The future of WildC.A.T.s!
Why love sucks in comics!
WIZARD®
#43
ON SALE IN FEBRUARY.
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WIZARD Profile

Here's looking at...DIANA SCHUTZ

One wonders if the smile that's always on the face of Diana Schutz is really one of bliss, and not one hiding the enormous stress that comes with being Dark Horse Comics's editor-in-chief. Regardless, the 39-year-old Montreal, Canada native is upbeat about the industry and her current role at Dark Horse.

A reader of comics as a child, Schutz got reacquainted with the genre thanks to the popularity of Steve Gerber's Howard the Duck character in the mid-'70s, when she attended graduate school at Canada's University of British Columbia. As a result of this "reunion" with comics, she dropped out of graduate school to work at a local comic store in 1978, where she worked for the next six years. At around the same time of working retail, she wrote articles for various fan periodicals like *Amazing Heroes*, *The Comics Journal*, and *Comics Buyer's Guide*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DARK HORSE COMICS

Her first comic book editorial post began in 1985 as a Marvel Comics assistant editor, which lasted "for exactly one week," she laughs. "It was a big corporation, and I guess I wasn't quite ready for that."

It was then that she moved to a smaller publisher in the form of Comico, which published books like Bill Willingham's *Elementals* and Matt Wagner's *Grendel*; the latter of which Schutz got involved with early on in its history in '85, earning her a solid reputation for being a creator's editor. She remained a staff editor until 1989, when she went freelance as an editor, and Comico remained one of her clients until the company filed bankruptcy in 1990.

Schutz relocated to the Oregon-based Dark Horse Comics that same year, as an editor of various titles, including a few of its licensed Aliens and Predator books. Recently, after completing a masters degree in communications studies from the local University of Portland, she became its editor-in-chief, having a hand in all of the publisher's wide array of genres. She stresses that she will continue to have a strong hand in overseeing the Grendel corner of Dark Horse with *Grendel Tales*, 1995's *Batman/Grendel II*, and various reprint trade paperbacks.

Schutz's first order of business was to consolidate Dark Horse's lines of books into four groups—creator-owned books, company-owned books, Legend books, and licensed books—to be headed up by four editors whom she will help manage and troubleshoot their books. "I prefer to give the editors as much autonomy as possible, but by reading books that we're doing well in advance of publication, I hope to guide them if they need help."

But Schutz puts the creator first. "Dark Horse was founded on the principle of being creator-friendly, and that's something I hope to reinforce in my tenure as editor-in-chief. The bottom line, really, is the creators; they are the people without whom there would be no companies, and," she pauses, "they're the people that pay my salary."

GRENDEL & ARGENT ™ & © MATT WAGNER

First comic book read...
I don't remember exactly. Definitely a Mort Weisinger-edited Superman book.

Favorite comic of all time...
Cerebus's "Jaka's Story." [*Cerebus* #114-#136.]

Comics you currently read...
Cerebus, *From Hell*, *Bone*, *Naughty Bits*, *Peep Show*, mostly black-and-white creator-owned books.

Person you'd most like to meet...
John Lennon. He's my hero.

Superpower you'd most like to have...
The power to make love stay.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
Any flavor of Ben & Jerry's™ ice cream.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid, a hockey stick my dad gave me when I was seven. As an adult, my Macintosh LC III computer.

Things you collect...
I collect pre-Comics Code romance comics, especially those done by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Favorite pastime or hobby...
Tuesday night at the jazz club.

Costume you wore the last time you went trick-or-treating...
Supergirl. It was a costume my mother sewed for me. We're talkin' years ago!

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...
Carol Kane.

Person you'd most like to work with...
Frank Miller.

Favorite musical performer(s)...
The Beatles are my all-time favorites; Liz Phair is my current fave.

Why do you read *Wizard*?
To see if *Grendel* ever gets a mention.